



BLUE AND GRAY

WEEKLY



Stories of Brave Northern and Southern Boys in the Civil War.

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BETWEEN TWO FIRES; OR, THE BOYS IN BLUE CUT OFF. *By LIEUT HARRY LEE*



The Blues were barely holding their own. Suddenly Jack turned and saw Lieutenant Martin and his detachment rushing back. The foe was coming over the ridge in the rear. "They have flanked us!" he cried. "We are between two fires!"

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BETWEEN TWO FIRES;

OR,

The Boys in Blue Cut Off.

By LIEUT. HARRY LEE.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE GENERAL HALLECK.

The great battle of Shiloh had been fought, and victory had declared for the Union arms. The two great armies of the North and the South had faced each other in one of the bloodiest and most desperately fought contests of the whole Civil War.

Grant's determined stand on the side of the ravine at Pittsburg Landing, when Beauregard hurled his whole strength in divisions and regiments against him, had told the tale.

The discouraged Confederates were compelled to retreat. During two days over one hundred thousand men had fought and fought in a forest where disorganization was at times complete.

Evolutions of any considerable extent were forbidden for this reason. It was a bush fight, in half Indian style. But twenty thousand killed and wounded men were evidence of its severity.

The battle of Shiloh and its results were important in one respect.

It taught the Southern leaders what they had been slow

to believe, after the cautious policy of McClellan, that the Northern troops could fight.

The star of Grant was beginning to rise. But even as it rose an event occurred which threatened to forever dim its lustre.

General Halleck, who had charge of the Department of the West, came up from St. Louis immediately on hearing of the great battle.

When he arrived on the field, his first move was to take Grant to task for the manner in which the battle of Shiloh had been fought. This, despite the fact that it was a Union victory.

History is not clear to this day as to Halleck's motive, for thus superseding a brave officer, who had proved himself at Donelson and at Shiloh. But it may be assumed that personal jealousy and dislike was as current in the days of the war as to-day in the time of peace.

However this was, Halleck now took charge of the army and its advance upon Corinth, the powerful stronghold of the Confederacy.

Halleck's plan was to advance upon Corinth by slow marches.

Every few miles a halt was called and intrenchments dug. Not until the 21st of May did his batteries arrive within three miles of the place.

In the meantime minor battles and skirmishes without number had been fought. Six weeks of a sort of guerrilla warfare furnished an abundance of thrilling incidents.

And it is during this period that the events of our story occurred.

Prominent at the battle of Shiloh and immediately under Grant's eye was a little company of youths, known as the Fairdale Blues.

They were from a small town known as Fairdale, in the State of New York.

In answer to the President's call for volunteers they had at once left school and started for the front.

After serving some time in Virginia they had asked to be sent to the West, where they joined Grant's army. Their career had been brilliant thus far.

Jack Clark, the son of Homer Clark, a well respected citizen of Fairdale, was the young captain. He was a handsome, manly fellow, brave and chivalrous, and popular with all.

His first lieutenant was Hal Martin, a schoolmate, and scarcely less popular than Jack himself. The Fairdale Blues were to a man brave and true.

They were fighting for the Union, and, as they believed, for the right. No less brave and convinced of the right were their opponents of the South. But the Blues were always triumphant.

It was but a few days after the battle of Shiloh, and the Blues were encamped not far from Pittsburg Landing, with the rest of the Army of the Tennessee.

The Union army was undergoing reorganization at the hands of General Halleck. The Blues, whose ranks were thinned in the late battle, were being recruited.

It did not take long to accomplish this, for the little company had a waiting list of youths in its own town, who at once started for the West in answer to a telegram to fill up the ranks.

So that, in less than a week, the Fairdale Blues had full ranks, and they were all ready once more for the field.

General Grant's temporary suspension had been a disappointment to Jack Clark.

The great general, whose taciturn ways were little understood, had been a quiet admirer of the Blues, and had placed implicit confidence in them.

Many an important mission he had confided to them, and never yet had he been disappointed.

"No use, Jack," said Hal Martin one day, "if Halleck continues to run this army we might as well go back to Virginia. He'll never give us a show."

"I think I'll go up and have a talk with him," said Jack, picking up his sword. "We'll get rusty lying around here in the trenches."

"Good for you, pard!" cried Hal. "Tell him to set us at something. We don't care what it is."

"I'll give him an earfull!" said Jack. "Perhaps he'll retaliate by sending us on a trip from which we will never return."

"Let us risk it!"

"All right!"

So it happened that Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues, applied at the headquarters of General Halleck. An orderly showed him into the presence of the great commander.

As Jack entered the tent he gave a start, and for a moment was a little disconcerted.

There were others in the tent besides General Halleck. There were General McClellan, General Smith, and General Sherman. The latter had just returned from his plucky expedition in wrecking the Memphis Railroad.

Jack saluted, however, and stood his ground. General Halleck glanced at him carelessly, and asked:

"Well, what report have you?"

"None, sir!" replied Jack.

"None! What do you mean?"

"How can I have a report when my company is kept languishing in the trenches. Give us a chance! Put us out to the front, and we will very soon make a report, sir!"

Halleck whistled softly.

"Bless my stars! Do you hear that, gentlemen? What young fire-eater have we here? I'll wager you'll get all you want before we get to Memphis!"

"Nevertheless it will please me and my men greatly if you will give us something to do," said Jack.

"Oh, you want service, eh?"

"Yes, sir! We are ready for any task you may give us!"

Halleck glanced shrewdly at Jack from under his brows. A twinkle of humor lurked in his eyes.

"Don't you draw regular rations?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good! Haven't you got good blankets and camp equipments?"

"We have, sir!"

"Then you have no reason to find fault. What do you mean?"

Jack looked straight at the general, and replied:

"I mean this, sir! When General Grant was in command he gave us plenty to do. Whenever he wanted a band of men for scouting or to make any sort of a dangerous expedition, he always sent for us and——"

"Oh!" Halleck's brow grew dark. "General Grant did that by you, eh? You were his pets, were you? I see the point."

"That is right, Halleck," said General Sherman, "those boys did great work at Shiloh and also at Donelson."

Halleck bit his lip. He was silent for some moments. It was easy for Jack to see that his story about General Grant did not please him.

He turned to his table and picked up a map. After studying it for some moments, he turned and said:

"So you are looking for trouble, are you, you young fire-eater? Well, I think I can do as well by you as Grant. Since you demand it, I'll send you on a scouting expedition."

Jack's face lit up.

"That will please me well," he cried. "Anything is better than idleness."

General Sherman laughed, and said:

"If all our boys were like this one, Halleck, we would have a great army."

"Certainly an ambitious one," said General Halleck. "But we'll see what kind of stuff he is made of. Now, my young friend, kindly examine this map. Are you familiar with the locality between Iuka and Corinth?"

"I am, so far as the most reliable maps go," said Jack.

"That is hardly sufficient," said Halleck, curtly. "Van Dyke, I think Carlton is outside. Send him in here."

The orderly saluted and withdrew. All this while Generals Smith and Sherman had been engaged in low-toned conversation.

A moment later the orderly returned, bringing with him a small man, whose thin features and keen, ferret eyes were suitable characteristics of a scout.

Carlton the scout saluted General Halleck, who said, sharply:

"Carlton, has Beauregard established outposts on the Iuka road?"

The scout gave a start.

"There are many roads to Iuka," he said. "Which one do you mean?"

"The road between Iuka and Corinth."

"Yes," replied the scout. "He has also a line of communication with Tupelo."

"That is across the line, in Mississippi?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good! Now I am going to send four regiments down that way to establish an outpost on the Iuka road, in case Price or Van Dorn should attempt to cross over to reinforce Beauregard. First, however, it will be necessary to skirmish or scout along that line and feel the enemy's strength. I don't want to bring on a general action or a battle. I seek only to drive back the outposts, and a hundred men are better for this purpose than a thousand. Do you understand?"

"What do you require of me?" asked the scout.

"I want you to accompany the expedition and act as guide. At no time will the four regiments which I shall send be more than a day's march behind you. This will be an expedition from which I may never hear. You may be wiped out by guerrillas or some heavier force. You will be constantly in a zone of danger and death. You will have to fight and march all the time, day and night. Ambush and traps will meet you on every hand. At any moment the enemy may envelop you, and you may never again be heard from. Does this suit you, my adventurous young friend?" And General Halleck turned to Jack with a grim smile.

CHAPTER II.

CARLTON'S STORY.

"See here, Halleck," said General Sherman, suddenly, "is this an important or necessary expedition?"

The general-in-chief frowned and made reply:

"Do you think I would suggest it if it was not?"

"By no means," replied Sherman, "but I would hesitate about sending even four regiments down into that country, for it is placing your men between two fires, as it were. Beauregard and Corinth on one hand and Price and Iuka on the other."

Halleck tapped sharply on the table with his pencil.

"My idea is to make a demonstration in that locality sufficient to puzzle Beauregard and divert his attention from our advance on his front. At the same time we will hinder Price from joining him."

Sherman knit his brows, and replied:

"Ah! I see! You could not have selected a braver company of boys to carry out your plans. I saw their work in the late battle, and I know what I am talking about."

"Very well," said General Halleck, with a wave of the hand. "They have asked me for the chance and I give it to them. If they are sorry hereafter it will be their own fault."

"Have no fear, General Halleck," said Jack, earnestly. "There is no danger of anything of that sort. I will assume all responsibility."

"You understand your orders, Carlton?"

"I do, sir!" replied the scout.

"Very good! You are to accompany Captain Clark and will be under his orders until he reports to me."

"Which I hope will be soon, and that I may report with success," replied Jack.

General Sherman held out his hand.

"I wish you success, Clark," he said.

"Thank you, General Sherman."

Jack also shook hands with General McClelland; and lastly with General Halleck. Then he left the tent.

It did not take Jack long to get back to the camp of the Blues. Carlton the scout accompanied him.

Hal Martin welcomed him eagerly.

"What is it to be, Jack?" he asked.

"We are to move, and at once," replied Jack. "Let preparations be made for a long march. Call the boys out at once. Make it lively!"

It is hardly necessary to say that the Blues turned out with the greatest of haste. They were delighted with the news.

It mattered not to them if they were going into danger. It promised action and a relief from the tedium of camp.

Of course some preparation was necessary. Rations had to be procured and also cartridges. But finally all was in readiness and the Blues fell into line.

At the tap of the drum they marched out of camp. Down the company street they went at shoulder arms. They made a fine and natty appearance.

Soon they were passing the picket lines, and finally the last vidette was left behind.

Carlton the scout rode in advance with Captain Clark. The scout's course was toward the Tennessee, keeping to the east of Chewalla.

This route he had chosen as the safest, for Beauregard's

outposts extended far out from Corinth, and the Blues might get entangled in the meshes of a net.

It was well for the brave little company that Carlton was with them. He was a clever scout and a born strategist.

Slowly the Blues crept on through swamp roads and thickets, until at nightfall they had reached a creek, where Carlton suggested that they encamp.

The Blues were glad to do this. As they were in the enemy's country, it was deemed unsafe to make campfires.

So they partook of cold rations. Some of the boys went bathing in the creek. Others reclined under the oaks and told stories. Some rolled themselves up in their blankets and slept.

Jack Clark and his young lieutenant, Hal Martin, however, did not as yet think of such a thing as sleep.

Jack took the precaution to post a greatly extended line of pickets. He was determined to guard against any possibility of a surprise.

Carlton, the scout, had disappeared. It was some time later that he returned. As he came into the glare of the lantern which hung at the entrance of Jack's tent, his face was seen to be ghastly white.

Blood streaked it. He gasped for breath, and then sank insensible.

Astonished, Jack and Hal sprang to his assistance. They carried him into the tent, and at once proceeded to resuscitate him.

It required some time, but liberal doses of brandy soon caused him to sit up and glare about him.

He was discovered to be wounded in several places, yet, fortunately, not seriously. As soon as he could speak, he gasped:

"I downed him! But it was a tough fight! He almost got me once!"

"What happened to you, Carlton?" asked Jack. "You are all used up!"

The scout shivered.

"I'm lucky to be here," he said. "I went out yonder to that little rise of ground to do a little reconnoitering. In the gloom I saw what I thought was a log across the path. I went to step over it, when it sprung up and grappled me. I never was in the clutches of so powerful a giant in my life."

"The log was a man!"

"Yes, and a powerful one. Neither of us let out a yell. He had me by the throat, and for a time I thought it was all over with me. But I broke his hold finally.

"He then drew his sheath knife. I got his wrist before he could use it. Once or twice he managed to wound me. I held on until every muscle in my body seemed dead, and I was strained beyond human endurance.

"We fought there in the darkness until we fell to the ground with exhaustion. I had the satisfaction of knowing that if I was exhausted, he was too. Finally we renewed the fight. Then fortune favored me. His foot slipped and the blade of the knife penetrated his throat. He was soon dead.

"For a long time I lay on the ground unable to move.

Finally, though, I recovered enough to light a match and look at the face of the man I had killed. Oh! It was awful! The man was my brother Dan!"

Both Jack and Hal gave a sharp cry.

"Your brother?" gasped Jack.

Carlton rocked to and fro in utter agony of spirit.

"Yes," he declared, "I killed my own brother. Am I not now cursed in the sight of heaven? And yet—it is a hideous retribution, for he foully wronged me!"

The scout's voice broke. Then his manhood gave way and he wept and prattled like a child.

Jack and Hal went out and left him. There was nothing they could do or say.

"A sad case," said Hal, with a shiver. "I suppose his brother belonged to the Confederate army?"

"You and I are doing the same thing, Hal," said Jack, sadly. "We are taking the lives of our brother beings."

"War is a dreadful thing."

"Yes, it is all wrong!"

Some time later, when they went back to the tent, Carlton was more composed. He welcomed them quietly. After a time he said:

"Boys, I have been through great trouble. I hope you will never have a like experience. I owe you an explanation, and if you desire, I will tell you my story."

"We shall be glad to hear it," said Jack.

The scout sat down on a camp-stool and began:

"When I was a boy my father was one of the richest planters in Alabama. I was given the best education that wealth could procure, and studied two years abroad. My brother enjoyed the same advantages. But he was larger of frame and more powerful than I. Moreover, he was a favorite with the ladies. I was diffident and not so popular.

"My father died, and the plantation was carried on by my mother. While she lived, both my brother and I lived on in the same manner as before my father died. It was then that I met Alicia Lane. She was the belle of Mobile and the most beautiful and charming young woman I ever knew.

"I fell in love with her, proposed, and was accepted. I brought her to see my mother. My brother Dan saw her and from that hour dated all our troubles.

"He at once plotted to undermine and overthrow me. So well did he succeed that a forged check for thousands was falsely charged to me. My mother turned against me and Alicia severed our engagement.

"She was soon engaged to my brother, Daniel Carlton. I was forbidden the house, and was altogether in a very unhappy frame of mind over my wrongs. Then my mother suddenly died.

"I found our home in the possession of lawyers, who forbade me to trespass there. It transpired that my mother's will cut me off wholly. I was left alone and penniless.

"Can you wonder that I was bitter and sought my brother that I might demand my rights. He turned his back upon me. I went out into the world without a penny to start life anew. That was eighteen years ago. When the war broke out I heard from my brother, whom I heard

of as having enlisted in the Southern army. I have
the cause of the Union.

"But I never dreamed of meeting him as I did. I never sought his life, and my soul is filled with
though he would have murdered me if I had not killed him."

"I have heard that Dan was wealthy and that he had a
rich estate near Corinth. I also heard that Alicia was dead
and that his daughter, who is said to be very beautiful, lives
with him there. Oh! her father will not come to her! I
have killed him!"

The scout broke down again in very agony of spirit.

Jack and Hal had listened with the deepest of interest to
this strange tale. They knew the awful remorse of Carlton
at the thought of having killed his brother, though that
brother had wronged him most foully. Their sympathy
was with the scout.

CHAPTER III.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

After a time Carlton threw off his despondency and came
back to himself.

"I am not going to accuse myself further," he declared.
"I acted wholly in self-defense. I don't believe that Dan
knew me, more than I knew him. But I must not neglect
to state to you most important news!"

"News!" exclaimed Jack, quickly. "What is it?"

"We have the Confederates on both sides of us!"

The two young officers were astounded. For a few
moments both Jack and Hal were startled.

"Are you sure of that?" asked Jack.

"I am!"

"On both sides of us? How do you mean, east and west?"

"No, north and south."

"Whew! We are cut off!"

"That is it, exactly. You are cut off. A heavy body of
troops is encamped only two miles behind us. Before us
is the right of Beauregard's line. If you go ahead they will
eat you up. If you fall back it will be into the hands of a
larger force."

"Then our only hope is to remain here?"

"That would be all right if you were never discovered."

"Whew!" exclaimed Hal. "We are in a trap. We are
cut off from a retreat. I see no way but to fight."

"That means annihilation," said the scout. "You cannot
do it."

"How did you learn all this?" asked Jack.

"From orders and dispatches I found on my brother's
person. He was carrying them for General Beauregard."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Jack. "Let me see them!"

"I certainly will."

The scout laid a packet of papers on the table. Jack and
Hal quickly went over them.

They afforded a revelation. It was discovered that there
was complete military communication between Corinth and
Iuka.

not defeat or capture you he was obliged to withdraw and
go on his way."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Jack. "Do you mean to say
the coast is clear?"

"For the present—quite so. But I advise you to change
your location with the greatest possible speed. By all means
away from here."

Jack was upon the point of doing that when you came,"
In Jack.

suit very good! I advise you to march south."

profit!" exclaimed the boy captain. "Why that would
my de into the enemy's camp!"

service it is the only course left you at present."

My daughter that?"

told me of Bragg's corps has swung around from the east,
if you would up this way. I think you will be in great
believing that here."

at heart. With!" cried Jack. "We will get away from
I'll follow your directions, Carlton, and

nce. Perhaps Bragg, in drawing
"Postscript:—It is because he has left a gap, through which
Elsmere for the present.

Yankees to get below Corinth General Halleck as yet?"

them repulsed and chased over

country. Then there will be a position we can cut, or do
United South."

emy's supply trains?"

nce. I will promise

Jack held the letter tentatively in his hand for a
moment.

"Mr. Carlton," he asked, "is Kitty Carlton your brother's
daughter?"

"She is," replied the scout.

"And this letter is to her?"

"Yes."

"Where is this place—Elsmere?"

"It is hardly fifteen miles from here. It is my brother's
plantation."

"Oh! Then I think we had better forward this letter
to its destination at the earliest moment?"

The scout shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please," he said. Then he threw himself down
wearily. "I must rest for a while. There is work ahead
for me. We must get out of here, and at once, or all is lost."

"So I have thought," said Jack. "But ought we to move
in the dark? We might stumble into a trap."

"I'll guide you," said the scout. "Just give me half an
hour to gather new strength."

"All right, Carlton. Come, Hal, let us go out for a
while."

The two young officers left the tent. They made their
way through the camp. Most of the boys had retired to
rest.

Jack and Hal reached the picket line. They found the
guard on the alert and pacing his beat.

They passed by him, and leaving the rough roadway, they
climbed a little eminence near.

outposts extended far out from Corinth, and the Blues might get entangled in the meshes of a net.

It was well for the brave little company that Carlton was with them. He was a clever scout and a born strategist.

Slowly the Blues crept on through swamp roads and thickets, until at nightfall they had reached a creek, where Carlton suggested that they encamp.

The Blues were glad to do this. As they were in enemy's country, it was deemed unsafe to make camp.

So they partook of cold rations. Some of the boys bathing in the creek. Others reclined under the oak told stories. Some rolled themselves up in their bluffs and slept.

Jack Clark and his young lieutenant, Hal Martindale, never, did not as yet think of such a thing as sleep.

Jack took the precaution to post a greatly extended line of pickets. He was determined to guard against the possibility of a surprise.

Carlton, the scout, had disappeared. He had all the while been on the move at once. Later that he returned. As he came in with a lantern which hung at the entrance of the picket line. Suddenly he was seen to be ghastly white.

Blood streaked his face. He gasped, "Surrender! Surrender!"

Astonished, Jack and Hal sat were spellbound. Then the scout carried him into the tent, a flash of light.

It required some time before the muskets smote upon the air and caused him to sit up.

"Now was discovered, boys! Get them, dead or alive!" It was the voice of the Confederate commander. But Jack and Hal had, by a miracle, escaped the shots and were flying down the hill.

They knew that it would be the worst possible sort of a catastrophe if they were captured. Straight for their own picket line they ran.

Then came the hail:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friends!" cried Jack. "The countersign is, all's fair in love and war!"

The picket lowered his musket. But Jack, as he passed him, cried:

"Call out the guard! Give a general alarm! We are liable to attack!"

The picket instantly fired his gun, and as a result the alarm was given. The guard came hurrying down, but by that time the enemy were coming up in the gloom.

Shots whistled about them, and they were compelled to fall back. Jack knew well the risk they were incurring.

So his orders were to draw back as slowly as possible. By this time the whole camp of the Blues was aroused and they were coming up in line of battle to repel the invaders.

How strong the Confederate line was it was impossible to say. But Jack felt sure that it was many times their own.

But they did not know this, therefore they did not venture to advance further. A rattling fire was kept up in the darkness.

Finally, then, the scout, was now on his feet once more, and look at this to explain what it all meant.

awful! "a detachment from Bragg's division," he said. Both are probably on their way to Iuka, and they have hit "You by accident."

"It's a pity they couldn't have gone by us without discovering us," said Jack.

"Probably they wouldn't have, if we had not gone out to that eminence to reconnoiter," said Hal.

"I hardly believe that," said Carlton. "But rest assured, we will fool them. I will report later."

The scout slipped away into the gloom. He had hardly gone when the foe renewed the attack.

Fighting in the dark is by no means a pleasant task. Jack kept his men busy answering the volleys for a time. Then he hit upon a new move.

He knew that it would not do to let matters go on thus for long.

The enemy would be sure to receive reinforcements. This would be a fatal thing for the Blues. It would mean the defeat of their expedition, and no doubt their extermination or capture.

He began to draw his line back slowly. The camp had been broken and all equipments removed to a safe distance in the rear. By Jack's orders all was ready for a retreat.

The young captain remembered that there was a creek a few hundred yards in their rear.

To reach this and cross it would bring them to the base of a steep ascent. This was rocky, and afforded most admirable defence.

A small body of men could here hold a large force at bay. Jack was decided to withdraw to this point.

In the morning he would make an effort to elude the foe in the thick woods beyond. He believed that by a rapid march east he might get beyond the Confederate wing.

If he could succeed in doing this the Blues could quickly swing about again to the south and extricate themselves from their present position between two fires, as it were, and perhaps strike a blow at the enemy's line of communication. This would consummate the plan of General Halleck.

So slowly the Blues began to fall back. At this the Confederate line pressed forward, and it required another stand to force it back. But finally the creek was reached.

It was not very wide, and was quite shallow, so the boys had no trouble in wading it. Once on the other shore they had a hot fight for some while to keep the foe from crossing.

But a short while later Jack withdrew finally to the cover of the ledges and boulders, which furnished a sort of natural shelter, and most admirable for purpose of defence.

Here the Blues ensconced themselves, and it must soon have become patent to the Confederate leader that their position was impregnable, for he seemed to, all at once, abandon the attack.

The firing ceased, and the Confederate line drew back. The Blues were glad to rest on their arms until daylight came at last.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCOUT'S RETURN.

Jack Clark was quite astonished, when the light of day broke, to see nothing of the foe. For some mysterious reason they had withdrawn.

The region was clear, so far as could be seen. It was a most astonishing fact.

"How do you account for that, captain?" asked Lieutenant Martin, as he came up. Jack shook his head.

"I cannot account for it," he said.

"They certainly cannot intend to let us escape?"

"By no means! You may be sure it is a trap of some sort, and we shall soon find it out."

"What has become of Carlton?"

"Has he not returned?"

"No!"

To the Blues it was most puzzling. They hardly knew what to do.

To remain where they were was sure to be fatal. To leave their present secure position might be to walk right into an ambushade.

It was certainly a hard problem. Jack used his glass to his best ability, but nowhere in the region could he see a sign of the foe.

There was certainly some reason for this strange action on the part of the Confederates. Jack was wary and watchful.

He studied the situation closely, and finally arrived at a definite decision.

"If we stay here," he said, logically, "the foe will invest our position and compel us to surrender. We will take our chances and march on."

"In what direction?" asked Hal.

"We will march east to try and get around the right wing of Beauregard's army. If we succeed, we shall gain much."

"Very well. Shall I give the order?"

"Yes," said Jack, promptly. "Fall in and march down to the creek. We will follow its course toward the Tennessee."

But just then a sharp hail came from the picket below. Jack stepped forward and glanced down. He saw that which gave him a mighty thrill.

Carlton, the scout, was just passing the guard. He came rapidly up the ascent. At sight of the young captain he saluted.

"Ah, Captain Clark," he cried, "I am back safely, as you see, and I am glad to find that you stood your ground."

"There was no other hope for us," replied Jack. "If we had yielded all would have been lost. Either we gave the foe a beating or he is up to some strategical game, for he has vanished absolutely."

"It is not that," said the scout. "You were attacked by a detachment which was under special orders to report at Corinth to-day. When their colonel found that he could

not defeat or capture you he was obliged to withdraw and go on his way."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Jack. "Do you mean to say the coast is clear?"

"For the present—quite so. But I advise you to change your location with the greatest possible speed. By all means get away from here."

"I was upon the point of doing that when you came," said Jack.

"Very good! I advise you to march south."

"South!" exclaimed the boy captain. "Why that would be right into the enemy's camp!"

"Well, it is the only course left you at present."

"How is that?"

"Well, Bragg's corps has swung around from the east, and is coming up this way. I think you will be in great danger to remain here."

"That settles it!" cried Jack. "We will get away from here at once. I shall follow your directions, Carlton, and march south."

"It is your only chance. Perhaps Bragg, in drawing from that part of the line, has left a gap, through which you can slip."

"I can send no dispatch to General Halleck as yet?"

"Not with safety."

"Is there any line of communication we can cut, or do we stand a show of coming upon the enemy's supply trains?"

"Yes, I think there is a very good chance. I will promise you plenty of chance for raiding."

"All right!" cried Jack, with renewed spirits. "Forward, Blues! Will you lead the way, scout?"

"I will."

Jack and Carlton at once mounted horses and started away in advance of the little column of Blues. They crossed the creek and marched back over the land they had retreated across a few hours before.

Not more than a mile away, and right in their course, was a little range of hills. The highway led through them. The scout assured Jack that these hills were not held by the Confederates.

"If you can get beyond them," he said, "you'll see the Confederates' lines over to the west toward Corinth. We will not go in that direction, we will keep going south."

Jack had learned to place implicit confidence in the sagacity of Carlton. He had never abused it.

On marched the Blues. They passed a little collection of negro cabins, and the entire colored population came running out to see them.

The coons clapped their hands and sang plantation songs. One of them, a gray-haired man, came up to the stirrups of Jack's horse, and cried:

"Massa, I done want fo' to gib yo' warnin'. Ole Mose he doan' want fo' to see de Yankees git whipped, an' yo's gwine into a trap, massa. Dat am a fac'."

Jack was startled and impressed. He pulled rein, and Carlton did the same.

"What is that, uncle?" cried the young captain. "Do you mean that?"

"I means ebery word I says, massa! It am a fac'. Yo's gwine de wrong way!"

Jack looked at the scout, and Carlton showed his surprise. He reined his horse nearer the negro, and asked:

"What do you mean, uncle? Where is the danger?"

"Ober dar, sir, in dem hills. It's de guerrillas. Marse Manton, he am at de dead ob dem. Dey is all froo dem hills, sah! I done tole yo' dat fo' suah, sah!"

"Humph!" said Carlton, as he turned to Jack. "I don't know whether to believe the old fellow or not. These dar-kies are not always reliable."

"It would be foolish for us to ride into a trap. How large a force has Manton got?"

"I don't know. I hardly believe it is over four or five hundred men."

"That outnumbers us."

"Oh, yes! We must not risk an encounter with them, if possible. Perhaps we had better send scouts ahead and make sure that the coast is clear."

Jack thanked the aged negro and gave him some silver coin. Then the Blues went on.

But, as Carlton suggested, videttes were sent ahead. No sign of the foe, however, could be seen.

"It would not surprise me, though, if Manton and his men were lurking in this vicinity," said Carlton. "He is recruiting just now, prior to a raid upon the Union outposts."

"I'd like to give him a setback," said Jack, with flashing eyes. "Military men I have a respect for, though they may be my enemies, but I abhor a guerrilla."

"So do I," agreed Carlton. "And, as this fellow Manton is the man selected by my brother for his daughter's husband, I have much curiosity to see him."

The Blues were now approaching the little range of hills. The highway led into a little cut, which was shaded by great trees.

The hour was yet early. As the little company marched on, it was with the most extreme of caution.

Presently, though, they began to ascend the cut in the hills. They had not gone far when a vidette came riding back in much excitement.

"Captain Clark," he cried, "I think the enemy is ahead of us and encamped beside the road. I saw armed men and horses."

At once a halt was called. Jack quickly arranged to leave Hal Martin in command. The Blues were deployed in the timber on either side of the highway. Anyone passing could not see them.

Then Jack and Carlton dismounted and went on up the road on foot. The young captain was anxious, if possible, to locate the foe.

Nearer they drew to the spot described by the vidette. And now they came to a halt. As the vidette had declared, armed men held the road beyond.

From their appearance Jack deduced that they were guerrillas. That they were Manton's men it seemed as if there could be little doubt.

But as Jack and the scout continued to watch they saw

a cavalcade of men come down the road. They were given a start when they observed that in their midst rode a prisoner.

"They've caught some poor chap," whispered Carlton.

"Now that's too bad. Let us keep a watch on them."

"We must rescue him!"

"Let us find out first if it is possible."

They proceeded to draw nearer in the shadow of the trees. They saw at the head of the cavalcade a man of powerful build, with square jaw and deep-set eyes. He wore a prodigiously large mustache.

"That is Manton himself," whispered Carlton. "Is he not a fine looking brute. But the prisoner——"

Carlton gave a start. Jack did the same. Their surprise was intense.

The prisoner wore a handsome uniform of gray. He was a young Confederate lieutenant. His face was clear and handsome, his bearing proud and brave.

"What does it mean?" whispered Carlton. "Dare Manton make a prisoner of a Confederate officer? He professes allegiance to the Confederacy."

"It is very strange!"

The two men drew nearer. Beside the road was a small cut in the side of the hill. It formed a sort of little pocket, with tree-crowned heights about it.

In this place were gathered several hundred of the guerrillas. Campfires blazed, and horses were tethered to the trees.

It was plainly a temporary camping place for the troop. Now, as Manton and his party rode in, all sprang up, and when quick orders rang out, they formed three sides of a hollow square.

Into this place rode Manton and his prisoner. The guerrilla chief dismounted and threw his bridle to one of the gang.

The prisoner's hands were bound behind him, and he could not help himself, but a couple of the band quickly and roughly pulled him out of the saddle.

"Stand him out here," roared the guerrilla chief. "Take a look at him, boys! He's a traitor to the Confederacy!"

The prisoner stood with proud, erect mien and flashing eyes among his foes.

"That is a lie," he said, hotly. "I am loyal to the Confederacy. No charge against my honor can be sustained."

At this Manton burst into a roar of ironical laughter.

CHAPTER V.

THE GUERRILLA'S PRISONER.

"You see, boys," shouted the guerrilla chief, "he gives us the lie! He denies that he is a traitor!"

An ominous growl went up from the company of rough men. It was enough for them that their chief had declared him a traitor. They believed it.

For the prisoner to plead his case would be an idle waste of breath.

Jack saw this. It made his blood boil. He understood the whole villainous game. He knew the young Confederate lieutenant would have no show.

In some way he had incurred Manton's enmity. He would pay the penalty, and that would be death.

"Do you know him?" whispered Jack.

"No," replied Carlton, "I am trying to guess who he is."

Just then the guerrilla leader advanced and shouted:

"William Opdyke, you are adjudged a traitor to the Confederacy. What have you to say in your defence?"

Carlton gave a great start and placed a hand on Jack's arm.

"Did you hear that?" he whispered. "It is young Opdyke, the youth whom my brother declared that Kitty should not marry."

Jack Clark was astonished. He rubbed his eyes to make sure that they did not deceive him.

"Is it possible that a man could choose Manton in preference to this young man who it is plain has the daughter's love?"

"You saw my brother's letter?"

"Yes."

"God alone shall judge him," said Carlton, with a deep sigh. "He foully wronged me, and now he would have done his own daughter as great a wrong."

"But—do you believe Manton will dare to kill him?"

"Will he dare? It is his game. If Opdyke is out of the way, he is ignorant enough to believe that his own suit would be successful."

"The dark scoundrel!"

"That is just what he is!"

"Carlton, we must do something to prevent this horrible deed."

"I wish we could, but I see no way. They outnumber us four to one. Only a bit of strategy would save him, and I fear they intend to hang him at once."

"Do you believe it?"

"It looks like it."

The prisoner had straightened up, and his gaze flashed over the assemblage of rough men.

"Are there any hearts here true to the Confederacy?" he demanded, in a ringing voice, "or are you all raiders and plunderers, with no sentiment of honor or fair play? If so, I can ask nothing of you. Otherwise you will yield me a fair trial, and that will prove my innocence."

Manton rubbed his sides and laughed boisterously.

"Will you listen, comrades?" he shouted. "He calls us all raiders and plunderers and devoid of honor! Oh, yes! so we are, of the kind of honor of which he boasts! Haw, haw, haw!"

A roar went up from the guerrilla band. It boded no good for the prisoner.

He seemed to see it, for his manner relaxed, and he fixed his gaze upon the tree-crowned heights like one resigned to an unavoidable fate.

"Well, speak up again! Let us hear more," snarled Manton. "Have you no better plea to make? Speak up, if you would save your neck!"

"I have decided that it is useless to appeal to such a tribunal," answered the young prisoner. "My fate is in your hands, and you can do with me as you will. But I will be avenged."

"Oh, you will, eh?" gritted Manton. "Poor satisfaction to a dead man. And what of her? Shall I tell you that she will be mine—all mine?"

"Never!" cried the prisoner, with quick impetuosity. "You fiend! She will never meet with such a fate."

"Oh, she will not, eh?" persisted the guerrilla chief. "I am tempted to let you live to see it, and then let you die the easier for it. Bah! Your race is run! You are nothing!"

Deliberately, Manton stepped up and spat in the prisoner's face. It was a filthy outrage, an insult to stir the whole being of the helpless man.

And, as if it seemed to yield him the power of a giant, Opdyke gave one wrench and freed his arms. The cords snapped, and with a triumphant cry he hurled himself upon his foe like a tiger.

He dealt Manton a terrific blow in the face, which knocked him bleeding to the ground. But before he could do more a dozen arms seized him, he was crushed to the ground and again bound.

Jack and Carlton had started up, quite forgetting the danger of exposure. Their whole sympathies were with Opdyke, and they longed to go to his aid.

But it was impossible. Manton crawled to his feet savage as a tiger. For one moment he glowered at the prisoner and seemed about to jump upon him.

But he restrained himself. Wiping the blood from his face, he gritted:

"Wait! I'll not kill you yet, for I want you to suffer the tortures of the infernal before you die! I will make you beg for mercy, beg for death! Bind him well! Take him away and see that he does not escape!"

Jack drew back with a deep breath.

"Come, Carlton," he whispered, "there is a chance. We must not remain here. Let us go back."

"There is a chance now that he has decided not to kill him at once," said the scout. "But—will you do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Go back to your company. Keep them well in hand. Don't attack this gang yet. Leave me here! I will report later."

Jack hesitated. But he finally said:

"Very well! I wish I could stay with you."

"It is better not to. I will hope to see you later in the day."

The scout glided away. Jack crept back through the trees until, after a time, he had rejoined his boys. They had been waiting anxiously.

As briefly as possible he gave them the story. All listened with interest.

"Quite a romance," said Hal Martin. "It sounds like a page out of a story-book."

8 "I hope the young fellow is rescued," said Corporal Tom Peters.

The second lieutenant, Walter Gray, voiced the same sentiment. All the Blues, even down to little Teddy Scott, the drummer boy, were in deep sympathy with young Opdyke.

Jack was now undecided what to do. He would much have liked to attack the guerrillas.

But he knew that this would hardly do as yet. The chances of a defeat were by far too strong. It was safer to wait and watch.

"I don't see how he dares to hang that young officer," said Hal Martin. "If he is a spy or a traitor he should refer him to General Beauregard. He has no right to order his execution."

"Ah," said Jack, "men of Manton's lawless stamp dare do anything. He will never report the matter."

Just then a startling thing occurred. The crack of a musket smote upon the noonday air.

The picket came in hastily. At once the Blues sprang to arms and deployed. Other shots now came through the trees.

But one conclusion could be formed. They had been discovered by the guerrillas, who were coming to the attack.

Yells and shots could now be heard in verification of this. Jack saw it was a case of fight or surrender.

The latter course he would never adopt. He at once deployed his men, and the battle was on.

The guerrilla style of fighting was of a type peculiar to themselves. They were bush fighters and, like Indians, not given to fighting in the open.

Since their experience at Shiloh the Blues felt perfectly at home at this sort of thing. They proceeded to hold their end up in excellent shape.

The battle waged hot, and Jack soon found that he must fall back to prevent being out-flanked. A number of his boys had been killed, and the young captain felt that his position was growing desperate.

But presently the Blues reached the summit of a ledge. Here they found shelter, and they kept up so hot a fire that the foe presently retired.

It was a matter of deep congratulation with the Blues that this was the case. They had been greatly outnumbered.

A determined charge by the foe would have carried their position and sealed their fate. But to charge was a habit not known to guerrillas.

It was as much a matter of surprise why the guerrillas had suddenly quit the conflict as why the regular Confederate soldiers had done so the night before. But an explanation even more lucid was quickly gained.

On the eminence above the ledges a tall tree spread its wide branches.

Corporal Tom Peters risked his life to climb this and take a view of the country. What he discovered was startling.

Up the Corinth road there was marching a full regiment of Confederate soldiers. They were coming straight through the cut in the hills.

It was easy now to understand why the guerrillas had

chosen to quit the scene. They had no desire to meet with regular troops.

"Well," said Jack, with a deep breath, "what do you think of that, Hal? Don't we have luck in getting out of hard scrapes? It looks to me as if all that we need to do is to remain right here and let the enemy pass."

"Will you do that?"

"Why not?"

"After they pass the guerrillas may come back, and they can locate us."

Jack saw the point.

"You are right, Hal! It will be better for us to get out of this. But where shall we go?"

"There seems to be but one direction for us to take."

"Which?"

"South, or keep right on this highway through the hills."

"We shall be a sort of advance guard for the foe in our rear."

"Well, I see no other plan. We certainly can't stay here. We can't go back and meet them. We must go ahead."

"There are many worse things than going ahead," said Jack. "Fall in, boys, and we will march out of this place. Send out videttes front and rear."

The order was obeyed. As they marched past the cut in the hills where the guerrillas had lately been encamped no sign of them was to be seen.

Where they had gone the Blues did not know. It was enough for them that the guerrillas now dared not attack them.

They pressed on rapidly, and in less than an hour emerged from the hills and saw an open country before them. It was a region to be torn with shot and shell before many days.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE PLANTATION.

Manton dared not continue the attack on the Blues for many reasons. One most patent one was that he feared meeting the regular troops.

He was practically an outlaw himself. While neither side recognized guerrilla warfare, yet they did not interfere with it.

Mosby, Forrest, and other cavalry generals, were really guerrillas, but they were not of so lawless a type as Manton. Hence they were recognized.

So, to avoid trouble, Manton had moved on. There was no doubt of this, for the Confederate colonel of the regulars would certainly have inquired into the rights and commission of Manton.

So the lawless guerrilla chief hustled back to his horses and mounted and rode away. Once again the Blues were extricated from a precarious position by a lucky chance.

But they knew that it would never do for the advance guard of the regulars in their rear to come up with them.

They pushed on at double-quick. It was not long before

they saw the fertile fields and substantial buildings of a plantation.

The Blues were out of rations, and hunger was beginning to oppress them. Jack saw that here might be a chance to secure food.

He had no thought of raiding the place. He would pay for what they required if it could be obtained.

The Blues halted at the entrance to the plantation grounds. Jack galloped quickly down the lane and into the yard.

He met a man whose dress and appearance indicated that he was the overseer. Jack saluted him.

"Are you the owner of this plantation?" he asked.

The fellow rubbed his eyes.

"No, I ain't," he replied. "I'm ther man in charge. But bless my stars, Yank, what are you doin' away down here?"

"Taking a look at the country."

"Oh, is that so? Wall, ye may find it resky afore ye git through."

"Why?"

"Don't ye know why? Thar's troops all around ye. Beauregard's headquarters is only just over that to Corinth. If he ever got his flippers onto ye it's good-bye for ye."

"All right," said Jack, carelessly, "I'm taking chances. But tell me, my man, can you furnish me with rations for my men?"

The plantation overseer looked dubious.

"We're Confederates," he said. "We ain't supposed to furnish food to the Yanks."

"Isn't Uncle Sam's gold as good as anybody's money?"

"Oh, yas!"

"Very good! I have plenty of it with me. Now some of it is yours if you want to do business."

The fellow hesitated no longer.

"You bet we'll do bizness," he cried. "We ain't so narrow as that. Ye can buy anything ye want at Elsmere."

"Elsmere!" gasped Jack.

"Yas, this is the place."

The boy captain felt a queer chill. This was the famous Elsmere plantation. Neither overseer nor anyone else knew that its owner and master was lying in death under the shrubbery in the woods above, the victim of his brother's superior strength. But this was true.

Jack recalled the story of Scout Carlton, and it gave him a queer thrill. Certainly it was all very gruesome to think of.

But just at that moment the clatter of hoofs was heard, and up to the spot dashed a handsome thoroughbred. On its back was a young woman, and Jack gave a start at sight of her.

In all his life he had never seen greater feminine beauty. She was rather slender in figure, and graceful beyond compare, and her wondrous eyes were fixed upon him. Their expression held him enthralled for a moment.

"What is this, Mason?" she asked, in a voice which had a soft intonation. "Have the Yankees taken Corinth?"

"Oh, no, Miss Kitty," replied the overseer, who hastened to assist her to dismount, "I don't think they have."

"That is an accomplishment which will very soon be heard of, Miss—Carlton, is it not?" said Jack, lifting his cap.

The Southern girl's color heightened a little. But she replied:

"I am Miss Carlton. By your uniform I judge that you are not of our army?"

"I am not," replied Jack, "unless your army is that of the blue?"

"My army is that of the gray," said the young girl. "Not until those who wear the blue are driven beyond our borders can the South be free and happy."

"I respect your sentiments," said Jack, "for I know it has become a matter of religion to you. But the true border-lines of the Union should be recognized and defended by both North and South."

"The South has a right to establish her own boundaries."

"The South, in common with all other parts of this country, accepted the Constitution nearly one hundred years ago. It binds all together. There is no hope in anything but union."

"What right have you Northerners to force us to continue a tie which has become obnoxious and impossible?"

"Because the keeping of that tie is essential to the very life and spirit of this whole country. If there comes separation it will be eternal, for all Europe waits the opportunity to step over here and dismember and partition us off."

"In the case of foreign interference the North and South would make common cause," she said.

"That cannot be, except under one government," said Jack. "But, pardon me, Miss Carlton, I did not come here to discuss the burning political questions of the day with you. I came here to ask you to sell me supplies for my troops. They are in a state of hunger."

Kitty Carlton looked surprised.

"My father is not at home," she said. "I don't think he would care to sell to your army. Yet, if you will wait until he returns——"

Jack coughed a little. He could not bring himself for a moment to speak the direct truth.

"Miss Carlton, I have painful news for you. Your father——"

A great, wild cry escaped her lips.

"My father—what of my father?" she cried, with blanched face. "Don't be afraid to tell me all. Let me know the worst! My father—is wounded——"

"Your father will not return!"

For a moment the young girl seemed about to faint. But she recovered herself, and with wonderful calmness, asked:

"He is dead?"

"Yes."

For some moments her slight frame shook with powerful emotion. Jack's whole being was touched.

"Miss Carlton, pardon me for breaking the news so rudely—but——"

She turned quickly, and fixed her tear-wet eyes upon him.

"Tell me in what manner he met his death?" she asked. "I know that he was doing the work of a spy for our service. Was he shot?"

"He was killed in an encounter in the dark with one of our men," said Jack, not disclosing the whole truth.

"And his body——"

"Is buried a few miles out yonder on the ridge. I will, if you desire, so describe the spot that you may easily find it."

"I thank you! This is a hard blow to me—although—it was not entirely unexpected. Oh, these are dreadful times! It is indeed terrible to think of, that the country is in a state of civil war."

"Let us pray that it may be soon ended, before more homes are stricken and hearts are broken."

"And yet—you are in arms against us——"

"In defense of the North, of our capitol at Washington, and of the glorious old Constitution, by which we must stand!"

She turned to the overseer, and said:

"Mason, sell to the captain what he may desire. Render the account to me later. I am now mistress of the plantation. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Miss Kitty, an' every one on ther plantation will stand by ye until death," replied the overseer.

She turned to Jack with a grave curtesy.

"I must be alone with my sorrow for a while," she said. "If, however, you tarry here for long, I will be glad to have you call at the house."

"Thank you," said Jack. "I fear the exigencies of war will forbid me the honor. I appreciate the motive highly."

He lifted his cap. She walked unsteadily into the house. She passed across the great Southern porch and vanished.

Jack now turned to the overseer, who said, garrulously:

"She's the fairest flower in this part of the kentry, captain. Everybody loves her. Thar ain't a nigger nor a white man thet wouldn't sell his soul fer her. But—to tell ye the truth, the old man was ther curse of her life."

Jack looked keenly at the fellow.

"He was her father?"

"Yas, but a durned unnatural one."

Jack remembered the story told him by Carlton the scout. With some curiosity, he asked:

"In what respect, may I ask?"

"He never seemed to treat her as a daughter. He seemed ter jest look upon her as a part of his goods an' chattels, that he might barter or sell or give away as he liked. I have no respect for the memory of a man who would give such a gal as she to thet cuss, Mark Manton."

"I have heard something of the sort," said Jack. "Is it true?"

"True? Why, he certainly meant to do it. He turned young Opdyke, one of ther cleanest young men in this county, away from ther house. But I kin tell ye one thing," and the overseer put his finger against his nose, "Manton never will live to win that gal agin her wishes. You bet she's too many friends on this plantation."

Jack felt a thrill of deep sympathy.

"Good!" he cried. "I hope that she never may. From all I have heard of young Opdyke, he is a noble young man."

"Thar's none better! Now, thet old Carlton's gone, thar'll be a different state of affairs here. Manton will be outside ther fence, onless"—and the overseer's face showed apprehension—"ther guerrilla comes down hyar and carries her off by force. He kin do that!"

"Yes!" said Jack, warmly, "and let me tell you that there is the whole danger. He will certainly do it."

Mason stared at the young captain.

"You believe it?"

"I know it!"

A ghastly hue came over Mason's face. He made a nervous gesture toward the house.

"She ought to go up ter Nashville fer a while," he said. "She'd be safer thar than here. Hang it, but I like ye, Yank! Ye're a square man, an' if all yer tribe were like you, we'd never fight ye."

"I am but a poor representative," said Jack, modestly. "One thing is sure! My company of Blues are bound to defend this plantation against Manton and his guerrillas!"

CHAPTER VII.

A FAIR HOSTESS.

"Anything we have is yours!" cried Mason, the overseer. "Bring yer company in here an' let 'em pitch ther camp. I'll see that ye have all ther pork and beef an' chickens an' sweet potatoes ye want!"

Jack went back, and with the Blues marched into the spacious plantation yard, where they made camp.

Mason was as good as his word. Negroes brought dozens of chickens, sides of ham and bacon, with half a beef creature. There was meal for corn cakes and bushels of sweet potatoes.

The Blues were soon enjoying a feast.

They did not fear an attack from the enemy, for videttes had been stationed far out on all the roads, so that fair warning could be given in case of the enemy's appearance.

It is needless to say that the Blues did justice to the fare provided them.

It gave them new heart and courage to have plenty of food.

While they were thus engaged, though, Mason, the overseer, suddenly appeared and said to Jack, in a low tone:

"Miss Kitty would like to see you at the house!"

Jack bowed, and said:

"I will respond at once."

It might be said that Jack Clark, had he been possessed of vanity or conceit, might have attached a significance to this special favor shown him by the planter's beautiful daughter. But Jack was not so foolish as that.

He knew that Kitty Carlton was a true girl and that her love was given to young Opdyke. As Jack thought of her

lover's present perilous position, he shivered. He could not summon sufficient courage to tell her of it.

Moreover, Jack Clark had an affair of the heart of his own.

At school, in Fairdale, his chum had been Will Prentiss, a Richmond youth, whose family was one of the best in Virginia.

At the breaking out of the war they had been compelled to separate. Will Prentiss had entered the Confederate service as captain of a youthful company known as the Virginia Grays.

So these two, the Northern boy and the Southern boy, erstwhile the warmest of friends, had parted nominally as foes. It was the irony of fate.

But Will Prentiss had a sister, a typical Virginia girl, sweet and charming Nellie Prentiss. She had espoused the cause of the South, of course, and had done effective work as a female spy.

Jack Clark and Nellie Prentiss had been lovers. Now they were estranged by that barrier which war had created. They might never meet again, but Jack Clark's heart was still with the fair Southern girl.

So, when the young captain stepped upon the porch of the Southern house and was met by its young hostess, he was by no means susceptible to other sentiments than those of sympathy and friendly interest.

Kitty Carlton's face showed her grief, but she greeted him cordially.

Upon the porch there had been spread a small table. Upon it was a tea urn and a few choice delicacies. She motioned him to a seat.

A colored woman poured the tea and then withdrew.

Jack Clark sat there on the vine embowered porch opposite the planter's daughter and sipped the tea and conversed with her.

For a time the topics were of a light order. But finally she asked:

"Do you foresee a speedy ending of the war, Captain Clark?"

"It pains me to say that I do not," replied Jack. "Both sides are well fortified and have large armies. Only a fearful defeat for one or the other could possibly turn the tide toward peace."

"It is to be regretted. Oh, so many valuable lives have been sacrificed!"

"That is true, Miss Carlton."

"My poor father is gone!"—her voice broke a little. "Oh, Captain Clark, you will forgive me for bringing up the subject! But I feel so lonely! I have no one to talk upon the matter with. I know you are a true gentleman, and I need advice."

Jack looked her squarely in the eye, and replied:

"Miss Carlton, I am very glad to be your friend, and, perhaps, so far as my ability goes, your adviser. You may trust me. I give you my word."

"I am very grateful. I must confide in some one. It is a great responsibility that I feel. This plantation is, of course, mine now. I am my father's only heir. It is true

that my father was a hard man. We have been for a long time estranged. He tried to force me to marry a man whom I did not like. I rebelled, and we have been as strangers for many months.

"I could never understand my father. He was cruel to my mother. He never manifested love for me. This has made my life very hard, and——"

"Miss Carlton, I have heard your story from other lips," said Jack, "and you may rest assured that I am one of the many who thoroughly sympathize with you. You will pardon me for saying it, but your father was an unnatural parent."

"While it is painful to me to realize this, yet I cannot conceal the truth," she said. "Now I want your advice. His desire was that I should marry Mark Manton, whom I detest, and who is a notorious guerrilla. Ought I to obey my father's wish?"

Jack looked at her in surprise.

"Do you—is your heart free?" he asked.

She blushed a trifle, and replied:

"No; my heart is promised to another."

"Then you would do very wrong to sacrifice him and also your life's happiness to comply with this unreasonable desire of your parent's."

A little cry of relief escaped her lips.

"Oh, you have helped me so much," she cried. "My conscience is much relieved. I do not wish to do anything for which I might, in later years, reproach myself. I have always endeavored to be a true and faithful daughter."

"There is reason in all things," said Jack. "A parent's wishes are usually wisely obeyed, but I don't think your father's point of view was correct."

"Then I have not acted wrongly?"

"No! By all means do not think of throwing your life away upon such a brute as that Manton. He is a dark villain. On the other hand, the man you love is——"

"What," she blushed vividly, "you know him? How do you know so much about me?"

"A certain person who has been acting as my scout has told me these things."

"Who is he?"

"At present I will not speak his name. You may know him some time. But I want you to be brave, for I have some serious news for you."

Her face paled.

"About—him?" she asked.

"Yes, about William Opdyke. He has been made a prisoner by Manton."

"A prisoner? By Manton? Why, how can that be? Both are in the service of the Confederacy!"

"Yes, but he is arrested on the trumped up charge of being a spy and a traitor."

Her face flushed, and her eyes gleamed like bright stars. She arose and her hands clenched fiercely. Jack saw and admired this exhibition of Southern spirit inherent in her being.

"A traitor! Rather it is Manton who is the traitor!"

Let them try to prove the charge! Why, General Beauregard will never believe it of him——"

"Ah! General Beauregard will never know of it."

She drew a deep breath, and a sudden light of terror came into her eyes.

"Oh, you think he will dare—do that? Try him upon his own responsibility? Why, he cannot! He would be exceeding his own authority, and——"

"You forget, Miss Carlton. Manton is a guerrilla, and has no responsibility. He is under the authority of no one. He is practically an outlaw."

She sunk trembling into her chair. Her face was ghastly.

"And Will Opdyke is in his power?"

"Yes."

"I see his dark game! He will try and put him out of the way, so that he will not stand in his path."

"Yes."

For a moment she quailed with awful fear. Then she sprung up.

"And I am wasting time here!" she cried, tensely. "He shall be saved, if I have to sacrifice my life. General Beauregard will intercede for me, and if Will Opdyke's life is taken his murderer shall hang for it. Captain Clark, I thank you for all you have done. I respect you, though you are a foe of my country. I go this hour to get a force of men and an order from General Beauregard, which Mark Manton will not dare disregard!"

Jack had just time to arise and bow. The next moment she was flying across the yard to the stables.

A moment more and he saw her riding with her long dark hair flying in the breeze. She galloped out of sight down the road toward Corinth.

Then, for the first time, Jack remembered that his position and that of his company was not the most secure. It was imperative that they should move on.

So he went back to the spot where the Blues were encamped. Hal Martin met him with an anxious face.

"Jack, ought we to tarry here longer?" he asked. "A vidette has just brought word that a large body of Confederates are to the north of us."

"Is that so?" said the boy captain, with alarm. "I think we have had a good rest. Let the boys fall in."

The order was obeyed, and soon the Blues were marching away from Elsmere plantation. The rest and the food they had obtained there had been of great assistance to them, and they felt much better.

But as the Blues marched out of the yard a negro came up to Jack and said, in an undertone:

"Oh, massa, all de brack people am glad to see yo' Yankees. I'se done got somefin' to tell yo'."

"Well, Pomp," said Jack, quietly, "what have you to tell?"

"Dere am lots ob covered wagons an' mules ober yender on der turnpike, massa. Dey hab supplies fo' General Bragg. I done fo't mebbe yo' would like to know dat."

Jack gave a great start.

"What!" he exclaimed, and his eyes danced. "I should say I would!"

"Dat am jes' what I hab been lookin' fo'—a chaine to tell yo'," said the coon. "It am jes' a lily ways ober de hill dere!"

Jack looked sharply at the negro. He saw that he was telling the truth. So he turned to the Blues and gave the order to change the course of their march.

"What's up, Jack?" asked Hal Martin, in surprise.

"We have hit upon one of Bragg's supply trains," cried Jack, jubilantly. "If it is not too strongly guarded we will certainly destroy it, and thus deal the enemy a blow they little expect."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LONG RETREAT.

Of course there was much excitement when it was known that they were in striking distance of the supply train.

Jack rewarded his negro informer liberally. The Blues went forward at the double-quick for the distant turnpike.

It was certainly an opportunity not to be neglected. No harder blow can be dealt an army than to destroy its supply train.

For men will fight and die as long as they are well fed. But starvation drives them to desperate resorts.

The Blues, in less than half an hour, had reached the hill spoken of by the negro.

They quickly climbed it, and the Iuka turnpike lay below them. Also they beheld a spectacle which gave them a wild thrill of joy.

Extending for over a mile was a train of wagons drawn by mules. These wagons were loaded with foodstuff for the Confederate army.

The train was scarcely guarded, for the Confederate generals would not dream of such a thing as an attack from the enemy right here in the rear of their army.

That they had reckoned wrongly was soon to be proved. Jack turned to the Blues and gave the thrilling order:

"Forward, Blues! Charge!"

With a wild hurrah the little company dashed down the hill. They jumped the rail fence, and in another moment were among the wagons of the train.

Such of the guards as showed fight were overcome. The others broke and fled. The teamsters left their teams.

Horses wheeled and reared and overturned wagons. All was confusion and wreck and disaster.

But the Blues worked systematically and quickly. They pulled rails from the fences nearby and heaped them up under the wagons and set fire to them. The horses were cut loose.

Jack hit upon the daring plan of appropriating these to his own use. But he found that without saddles and equipments this was hardly feasible.

So the horses were stampeded. The wagons and supplies were fired.

With lightning rapidity the Blues passed the length of the wagon train. The scene along the road was one of utter destruction.

The supplies were mostly of a greasy and inflammable nature, and burned readily. In a short space they would be ruined, if not destroyed.

With marvellous quickness the Blues went the length of the train. But they knew there was need of this.

The foe would certainly get an inkling of what was going on. Word would reach them, and then an overwhelming force of cavalry would sweep down to win vengeance.

But Jack Clark was too shrewd to take chances. He at once, when the end of the wagon train was reached, drew his men off into the woods, away from the highway.

"We have got to make a quick change of base," he declared. "If we remain here we are lost."

"Now is just when we need Carlton," said Hal. "To tell you the truth, I don't know just where we are."

"I know that we are between the enemy's lines," said Jack. "We have dealt them a hard blow, and even if we are captured, our expedition will not have been in vain."

"By no means! We have accomplished a great deal!"

"I think so."

Through the deep woods at random the Blues marched. Their purpose was to get as far away from a highway as possible.

On they kept for a couple of hours. It was now in the middle of the afternoon.

They reckoned on having marched at least seven or eight miles. This should place them far to the east of Corinth, and Jack had begun to entertain hopes that they could slip out beyond the enemy's lines and accomplish the desired feat of getting around Beauregard's right wing.

If they could succeed in this they would have a clear course before them, and stand a good chance to strike at his telegraph communications and even his line of supplies, and at the same time find it comparatively easy to strike and get away.

Jack Clark was already in a better humor. He wondered of course where Carlton was and if he had succeeded in his purpose of rescuing Opdyke.

But for the time being he was by far too deeply engrossed in the safety of the Blues to give much thought to anything else.

But, though the Blues had marched all this distance through the solid woods, which had seemed to assure them of ultimate escape, it was not to be expected that this could last forever.

So, all at once, they came out from the dense forest. The country which lay before them was rolling and replete with high ridges.

Jack led his little company along the brow of one of these ridges. Suddenly the crack of a musket smote upon the air. The ringing hail of a picket followed it.

The fellow was seen, in his uniform of Confederate gray, under an oak tree on the top of the ridge.

The bullet whistled past Tom Peters' ear. At once the fat little corporal shook his fist at the distant marksman.

"It's a bad eye you have," he shouted. "Let me get a bead on you, old fellow, and I'll make you dance."

But the picket evidently had no idea of taking chances. He set out over the ridge at full speed. In another moment he was out of sight.

"That's bad," declared Lieutenant Martin. "We're going to have trouble, Jack. I am afraid we've hit upon some part of Bragg's main line."

"That is for us to find out," said the young captain. He spurred his horse to the summit of the ridge.

Beyond he saw a deep ravine. Along the side of this he saw a swarm of gray-clad Confederate soldiers.

But he could not see any indication of a continuous line, nor that there was more than a small party of them. Jack was extremely loth to fall back upon his tracks.

He made up his mind quickly. Back he dashed to the base of the ridge.

"Deploy your men, lieutenant," he cried, "we'll meet their attack until we know how strong they are. If necessary, we will fall back over that ridge in our rear."

"All right, captain!"

The Blues were eager for a fight. A retreat was not to their liking. So they quickly ran out in line of battle.

They were none too soon. Over the ridge came the pennant of the advancing troops. Fire was opened at once.

And it was answered by the Blues. The battle was on, and for a time it was hot and furious.

The air was full of bullets. Men dropped here and there. But the Confederate loss was heavy, owing to the easy target they made against the sky line.

Jack felt confident of holding his ground, until suddenly there was a crashing report and a shell burst over their heads. In an instant a thrill of dismay seized the Boys in Blue.

"Artillery!" cried Hal Martin. "We can't stand against that, captain. They can cut us all to pieces."

"That is true," agreed Jack. For a moment he was deeply troubled. Then he said:

"There is no help for us. We must fall back over that ridge. Lieutenant Martin, take a dozen men and fall back to the ridge to reconnoiter. If the way is clear we will retreat."

"All right, captain!"

Hal and his men started for the ridge in their rear. They were soon out of sight. The battle now waxed hotter than ever.

The shells became more frequent. Jack saw that they could not hope to stand their ground for long.

Then the worst discovery of all dawned upon them.

The Blues were barely holding their own. Suddenly Jack turned and saw Lieutenant Martin and his detachment rushing back. The foe was coming over the ridge in their rear.

"They have flanked us!" he cried. "We are between two fires!"

It was a fearful revelation. There, over the ridge, was seen the Confederate flag and lines of gray beneath it. It looked as if the jig was up.

An officer of less nerve than Jack Clark might have gone to pieces at that moment.

But not so the gallant young captain of the Blues. His courage was as great and his manner as cool as ever.

The foe were in front and rear. But in a case of this sort as he well knew he was better off for an evolution with a small body of men than a large one.

With a regiment Jack might have found it difficult to accomplish what he did. With a small company like the Blues he had only to change front, making his line wedge-shaped, with a front to either foe. Thus he dropped back gradually to the edge of the woods.

It was a master stroke, and could only have been conceived and executed by a genius. Such was Jack Clark.

Over each ridge poured the soldiers in gray. They were in heavy force, and the Blues would be easily wiped out at close quarters.

But, making a hot fight all the while, the little company fell back into the cover of the woods. The Confederates tried to come down upon both flanks, but the Blues fell back so rapidly that they missed the mark.

Jack saw that three regiments of infantry and one battery were the force against which he had been contending.

A pitched battle was not to be thought of. His only hope was in retreat.

So back, further and further into the woods, went the Blues. They were simply going back in their tracks, and the fact worried Jack greatly.

For he knew that it must be fatal in the end. They would be forced back into the ranks of his pursuers at Elsmere, and this meant capture or extermination.

It was the tightest position in which the Blues had been placed yet. Jack made this fact known to Hal, who at once partook of the young captain's fears as well.

CHAPTER IX.

BREAKING THE LINE.

"It looks bad for us, Jack," said Hal, dubiously. "These fellows in front of us will certainly follow us up."

"I wish we were all mounted."

"Why?"

"I would venture a dash through their line."

"We cannot do that at present."

"No."

"We have the foe in our rear also. I tell you Halleck gave us tough work to do this time."

"I should say he did!"

"I fear we are caught. Well, we have done our best. But I will not give up hope yet. We will hold off here in the woods until nightfall. Something may turn up to aid us then."

"I have a plan."

"What is it?"

Hal took a pencil and a slip of paper from his pocket. He quickly and skillfully made a diagram.

"You see," he said, "we are the inverted apex of a triangle. The two extremities or corners are both pursuing regiments of our foes."

"That is very clear," agreed Jack.

"Well, as we are drawing back and keeping a fire up on either wing, we are drawing down upon a force in our rear."

"Just so."

"Now, my plan is this: If the foe remain in their present respective positions, when darkness falls I suggest a move which may seem dangerous, even fatal. This is the move:

"Let campfires be built in the woods here to deceive them. Then we will cease our retreat, and in the darkness concentrate our force and make a quick dash for an escape through the center of their line. They will naturally swing around to envelop our camp. By the time they have descended upon it we will not be there. I fancy their line is thin just ahead of the center. We will break through, and even if our ruse is discovered and they come back in pursuit, we have changed our line of retreat."

Jack saw the point at once. He recognized the weak as well as the strong points of the move.

"It will largely depend upon the strength of their center," said Jack.

"Just so," agreed the young lieutenant. "It is, so to speak, taking a desperate chance. But if their line is stronger at the wings, as I fancy it is, for their whole attack has been from either flank, then we will succeed."

"And I believe it is," cried Jack, with inspiration. "The very fact that their attack has been made on both wings would seem plain evidence that their main force is concentrated there."

"Just so. Of course we would have to gain a little time and we would have to act quickly. They would, as soon as they discover our ruse, try to smother us."

The more Jack studied the plan the better pleased he was with it. He believed it could be made to succeed.

The day was waning fast, and even now the forest arches were getting dark.

The Blues continued to fall back fast enough to keep pace with the attacking lines on either side, which seemed desperately endeavoring to get ahead of them and cut them off.

So the game went on. On the whole, the Blues were gallantly fighting an up-hill fight against odds.

The foe were numerous and powerful enough to overwhelm them with the greatest of ease. But yet they were held at bay.

The real danger came when darkness began to settle down.

It gave the foe a chance to creep in closer. But at the same time the Blues could extend their line and hold them off.

As soon as it grew sufficiently dark Jack and Hal proceeded to develop their plot.

Every moment they had listened for the sounds of an

enemy in their rear as they fell back. But those sounds did not come.

A detachment of the Blues built roaring campfires in a line through the woods. These were left burning.

Then quickly, in obedience to orders, the little company concentrated in the dark forest in front of these fires. Not an instant's time was lost.

Jack and Hal, in the lead started at the double-quick through the woods, back in the direction of the open country.

It was a desperate chance they were taking. If they should succeed, all would be well.

But if the enemy in front was too strong and held them for even the briefest space of time all would be up. The two wings would descend and envelop them. All depended upon breaking through the line of the foe.

On went the Blues.

One hundred yards were covered in a quick space of time. Two hundred, three hundred, and then suddenly a line of glittering steel showed dimly in their front.

"Steady! Hold the line!" rang out the order of the Confederate colonel.

"Forward, Blues! Fire!" shouted Jack Clark.

A volley leaped from the muzzles of the Blues' guns. Then Jack waved his sword, and shouted:

"Now, Blues, for life and liberty! Charge, bayonets!"

With a rousing cheer the Blues responded. They swept forward like a whirlwind. The next moment they were in the Confederate line.

The scene which followed baffles description. The Blues knew that their sole hope of escape was to break the enemy's line.

So they hurled themselves into the gap made by the volley. There was a sharp hand-to-hand fight. Bayonets locked with bayonets.

But the Confederate line was in just the condition Hal had reckoned upon.

It was thin, and the Blues went through like a cyclone. They passed on for some few hundred yards beyond, leaving the Confederates in a disorganized state.

They ran until exhausted. Then Jack called a halt and they deployed again in a line of retreat.

They could hear the puzzled and astonished foe coming in retreat. But Jack had but few fears.

He knew that he was falling back toward the Tennessee, and consequently toward safety. So he hurried the retreat, but yet kept it orderly.

It was not long before they were back at the point from whence they had been driven. Here they climbed the ridges and fell back across the open country.

Until daylight they were pursued. Then the pursuit closed.

The Confederates gave it up. The Blues could congratulate themselves on having made a masterly evolution, which had extricated them from the most dangerous and apparently hopeless position they had ever been in.

"Hurrah!" cried Hal Martin. "We pulled out of that scrape in good shape, Jack."

"I should say we did," cried the young captain. "And the credit belongs to you, Lieutenant Martin."

"Pshaw! My plan was simple enough. It might have failed."

"But it had the virtue of success. You did well."

The Blues heard this and gave Hal a cheer. He blushed modestly.

"Well," he cried, "what is the move now? Ought we not to rest and recoup a bit?"

"Yes," agreed Jack, "but it is not quite time yet. We must make sure that we are safe from a surprise attack."

"How shall we do that?"

"Halt right here and send out scouts."

"Give me a chance at that," cried Tom Peters. "I am getting rusty."

"The chance is yours," said Jack. "Now, boys, you may bivouac for a time. We all need sleep."

It was a welcome order, and the Blues proceeded to execute it. In a short while they had fires going in the morning light. Some of them cast themselves down upon the ground and slept.

Jack Clark looked at his brave little company of boys rather ruefully, and noted that their ranks were thinning.

It would be easy enough to recruit when they should get back to the Union camp.

But the loss of sixteen of their brave lads had been a hard blow. Moreover the whole company showed the effects of their strenuous experiences thus far.

Jack realized that the strain had been intense, and the Blues needed a brief rest and change. But at the present this was not in the range of possibility.

While the Blues were resting Jack and Hal mounted their horses. The company was left in charge of the second lieutenant.

They galloped away across the country, and presently came to a highway. They were riding along this, when, from the bushes beside the road there staggered a ghastly, tottering wreck of a young man.

His clothes were in shreds. His eyes were sunken. His cheeks were hollow and livid, and his right arm hung limply at his side.

"Help!" he articulated feebly. "Give a dying man help! I know you are Yankees, but you will help me."

"Help you!" cried Jack, springing from his horse. "You poor chap, of course we will help you. But what is the matter with you? What has happened to you?"

"I have been in trouble," gasped the exhausted man, as he tottered forward. "I have been in the hands of Manton, the guerrilla. He is a human fiend! He tried to torture me to death. But I escaped, and I have been a whole day and night in the dismal purlieus of a swamp."

Jack bent forward and scrutinized the stricken man's face. Then he gave a mighty cry.

"Great Cæsar! It is Opdyke!"

The fellow gave a start, looked searchingly at Jack, and said:

"You know me?"

"I know you by sight. But, my soul, how you have changed in forty-eight hours! Where have you been?"

"Who are you?" asked Opdyke.

"I am Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues."

"Oh, I have heard of you. Among our men there is great admiration for you and your company."

"Very good! Now, my dear sir, I want to tell you that Miss Carlton, the girl you love, is seeking you."

"Seeking me?" ejaculated Opdyke.

"Yes."

The young lover covered his face with his hands and was silent and thoughtful for a moment.

CHAPTER X.

THE GUERRILLA CHIEF AGAIN.

"What you say causes me much surprise," he said. "Why should Kitty Carlton seek me?"

"Can't you guess? She believes you are in the hands of Manton, the guerrilla. We carried the report to her. She swore to find you or die in the attempt."

"Heaven bless her!" he murmured. "My own Kitty. But I had given up all hopes. Her father cast me from his door."

"Her father can interfere no longer."

"What?"

"He is dead."

"Dead?" Young Opdyke gave a great start, and his face changed. A wistful light came into his eyes.

"My chances are slight," he said. "I am by far too humble and poor. She liked me once, some time ago. But I have nothing to offer her. She was raised in affluence. She could not descend to wed a man like me."

"Don't you believe that," cried Jack. "I know that she is true to you and would give much to see you."

A light of deep pleasure came into Opdyke's eyes. He arose briskly.

"I must go on," he said. "I am going back to Elsmere. I shall meet her once more. Then I will know my fate. Is all true that you tell me?"

"It certainly is. I advise you not to try to go to Elsmere at once. Wait for the course of events. But tell me, where did you leave Manton?"

"Manton?" Opdyke passed a hand across his brow vaguely.

"Oh, yes! I recall it now. He tortured me to the point of death in an old cabin up in the hills. I was cast into a slimy cellar to await the coming of another day. While lying there I discovered a drain built underground. It was of dimensions sufficient to allow me to escape. I crept through it and wandered into the swamp. What I suffered has befogged my brain. I have wandered about until this moment."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Hal. "Manton should hang for such inhuman work."

"He will hang when I get hold of him," said Jack. "You were treated most inhumanly, Opdyke. But a night of rest will fix you all right. You shall go back to our camp, and we will soon give you remedies to restore you."

Tears gushed from the suffering man's eyes.

"You are kind to me," he said. "I can never repay you."

"We do not ask pay."

"But—your camp—is it far?"

"But a short distance. You shall ride my horse," said Jack, dismounting. He assisted Opdyke into the saddle.

Back at camp the unfortunate young Confederate officer was given food and stimulants. He soon began to reveal a semblance of his former self.

He inquired eagerly about Kitty Carlton. Then Jack told him unreservedly the story of Carlton, the scout, and of the tragic death of Daniel Carlton.

Opdyke listened with interest.

"Dead," he muttered. "And at the hand of his brother, whom he so foully wronged. Only think of that. Poor Kitty! She has suffered much. Oh, I must gain strength to go to her, for I fear she may fall into Manton's hands."

"I advise you not to leave here until you are stronger," said Jack. "I have decided to rest my command here for twenty-four hours. Then we shall strike out to make a raid on the enemy's rear."

"Very good," said Opdyke, with a smile. "It is curious that you should reveal your plans to me. You must not forget that I am a Confederate of the rank of lieutenant."

"I am assured that you are honorable," said Jack.

"You may be sure I would reveal nothing I have seen. But I presume my attitude here is that of a prisoner of war?"

"No," replied Jack. "I do not hold you a prisoner. You were not in service when captured. I am deeply interested in your affair with Miss Carlton. I much admire the young woman, and I desire to see her happy."

"God bless you," said Opdyke, with deep feeling. "If all Yankees were like you, we'd never fight 'em."

"I am sorry that the land should be cursed with such a war," said Jack. "But we must fight it out to the bitter end, I suppose."

"Oh, yes. But let me ask you, where is this man who claims to have killed his brother in self-defense. What is his name—Benjamin Carlton?"

"He is the one, and a very honest man. He is an expert scout. He has an affair to settle with Manton, and at present is engaged in tracking him."

"I understand all now," said Opdyke. "I am sure all will come out well in the end. My escape is a miracle, for I would certainly have been killed in the end."

All that day and the next the Blues rested safely where they were. By that time Opdyke was quite restored.

Jack now felt it his duty to take the war into the enemy's camp. He was determined to hunt down the guerrilla, Manton.

If he had any prisoners it was meant to liberate them. From the story of Opdyke it was safe to assume that the guerrilla chief was not far away.

Jack sent scouts out far and near. On the third day of their stay in the present locality one of them came in with a report.

"An armed body of men are sweeping up the valley on the other side of this ridge," he said. "I could not get near enough to learn whether they were of the regular Confederate army or not."

"We will be prepared," said Jack.

By this time Opdyke had quite recovered his strength. Only in looks did he show the effects of the terrible experience he had been through.

He was eager to join in the attack upon the guerrillas. He insisted upon falling into the ranks when the Blues formed for the march.

Jack marched the Blues to the summit of the ridge. From here a good view of the region beyond could be had.

Somewhere over in that region was the army of Price, hastening to join Beauregard at Corinth. As history narrates it, they only got as far as Iuka.

Jack studied the country with great care. His mind was wholly made up as to his plan of action in the future.

After dealing the guerrilla, Manton, a blow and ascertaining, if possible, the fate of Kitty Carlton, Jack intended to make a detour to the north through the region between Price's advance and the right wing of Beauregard's army. All this, of course, depended upon the state of affairs at that time.

If Price occupied the region and filled it completely, the project would be out of the question.

But Jack did not believe this would be the case. It afforded him the only logical way of return to his own army.

No doubt by this time Halleck would be wondering what was the fate of the Blues. Jack smiled grimly.

He understood quite well that the great Union general had never dreamed that the Blues would venture to penetrate so far into the enemy's territory. In fact he doubtless did not believe it possible.

"When he learns that we have been almost to the gates of Corinth and have destroyed General Bragg's supply train, he will believe we have done something," he reflected.

Jack walked along the ridge and studied the country below carefully.

Then he was given a great start. He saw a file of horsemen going through a distant ravine.

He studied them closely.

From their dress and appearance he concluded at once that they were guerrillas. He even fancied he saw Manton at their head.

He watched them long enough to become satisfied that they were bearing to the north. At once he gave orders to the Blues to go forward on the double-quick.

"We must cut them off," he said. "They must not escape us."

The Blues pressed forward eagerly. It was not more than an hour later that they came to the banks of a creek.

Following this for a mile they reached a fordway. Here

they rested on their arms. It was Jack's belief that the guerrillas were making for this ford.

The Blues crouched in the undergrowth and waited. It was over an hour before anything unusual occurred.

Then from the forest emerged a couple of advance riders. They came slowly down to the ford and crossed over.

They were not molested.

The Blues were after bigger game. They kept silent and waited until the tramp of horses' feet and rattle of sabres told of the coming of the guerrillas.

The next moment they came into sight. A hard looking crew they were.

Dressed in nondescript, it was no wonder that their presence in the country terrified the honest people of the region.

There was nothing too villainous, no outrage too dastardly for this crew. At their head rode Manton himself.

On the desperado's face rested a dark cloud. It could be seen that he was not altogether in a cheerful mood. With short terms of command he ordered his men to cross the stream.

It was Jack Clark's opportunity.

"Ready, Blues! Fire!"

A rattling volley cut into the ranks of the guerrillas. Men tumbled from their saddles, and horses went careening up the highway.

For a few moments the guerrillas were thrown into a state of panic and disorganization. Their horses broke and plunged with the volleys delivered at them.

And Jack did not spare them.

With quick, sharp orders he directed the fire:

"Steady, Blues! Fire slow! Give them a volley in flank now! Ready, fix bayonets!"

With a rattle of steel the bayonets were fixed. The guerrilla chief was behind his men, showing shameful cowardice.

The guerrillas tried to answer the fire. They were not of the kind to fight in the open, though.

So they drew back. But the fight soon began to assume heavy proportions. Jack wondered if he had done the best possible thing in attacking the guerrillas. What might have been expected now occurred. The guerrillas seemed determined to essay an assault in their turn.

They massed behind a small ridge and the Blues were driven back. This seemed to give the guerrillas fresh courage, and they came to the attack themselves.

They had dismounted, their horses being sent to the rear. With their carbines blazing they came down the ridge.

Jack Clark had no trouble in holding his men firm. They were individually brave.

But he saw that the volleys of the larger force were thinning his ranks woefully.

CHAPTER XI.

A DESPERATE POSITION.

The boy captain felt a chill as he saw his brave comrades sinking about him.

He could not think of sacrificing them in such wholesale manner. Yet, for a time, it seemed as if nothing else could be done.

The guerrillas must be held and thrown back to admit of any sort of retreat. The Blues did not seem strong enough to do this.

Exultingly and confident, the crew of ruffians now came charging down. Jack grasped a musket and joined in the firing line.

"Steady, boys!" he called, as he bit off a cartridge and rammed it home. "Give it to them! Drive them back this once. We will then change base."

With a heroic effort the Blues made response.

A concentrated volley opened a gap in the guerrillas ranks. Jack was quick to see the opportunity.

It was a risky thing to do in face of such numbers. But if successful the foe would be scattered.

He leaped to the front instantly and gave the order:

"Forward, Blues! Charge!"

Into the gap with a wild cheer went the Blues with bayonets fixed. Their impact was terrific, and they went through the guerrillas' line like a flying wedge.

The guerrillas were staggered by so fierce a counter-assault. They reeled and fell back. In a moment they were disorganized. Right and left the Blues cut their way fiercely. They bayoneted the desperate foe and scattered them like chaff. But Jack was not foolhardy. He knew how to win a victory and how to secure it.

So he gave the word to fall back. The Blues did so in good order, leaving the demoralized guerrillas to reform as best they could.

On the little ridge hasty intrenchments were thrown up, for Jack knew that the guerrillas would not as yet abandon the attack.

They would certainly renew it, and the boy captain wanted to be ready for it.

But just then Hal Martin gave a shout:

"Hello!" he cried. "What is that?"

"A flag of truce!"

Such it was. One of the guerrillas advanced, bearing a white flag. With him was Manton.

Jack was surprised.

"I wonder what he wants," he exclaimed.

"Perhaps he wants to surrender."

"I doubt it."

Opdyke, pale and rigid, stood beside the boy captain.

"Let me go out with you to answer the truce," he said.

"Will you grant it?"

"Certainly," replied Jack, "but we must guard against treachery."

"He will hardly dare to show it here, will he?"

"I would not trust him."

But Jack and young Opdyke now advanced to meet the truce-bearers. Manton's face grew livid at sight of the escaped prisoner.

"Well, sir," said Jack, curtly, "what is your desire?"

Manton shot a vindictive glance at Opdyke, and then said:

"I have come to ask if you have had fightin' enough."

"What do you mean?"

"Jest what I say."

"In answer I will say that we will fight just as long as you will, and I believe we have you whipped."

"Do ye?" snarled the outlaw. "Don't you believe it! We are just about to wipe you off the earth. But we thought first we'd give you a chance to surrender."

Jack laughed at this.

"Don't entertain any such delusion," he said. "We have no intention of such a thing."

"Then ye won't take my terms?"

"No!"

"All right," gritted Manton. "I kin only tell ye that we will show no quarter. We'll kill every man of ye."

"That is Indian style," said Jack. "In retaliation I will say that we shall hang you on capture."

"Ye'll never capture me!"

"Is this all you have to say?"

"Wait a moment, I'd like a word with this young cub here."

He turned to Opdyke with a venomous glitter in his eyes.

"So ye slipped the leash, didn't ye? I suppose ye feel safe now?"

"I am safe to square accounts with you as soon as I can report to General Beauregard."

"He'll hang ye the moment ye do. Your position at this moment proves ye a traitor."

Opdyke gave a start. His hands clenched, and he made reply:

"You treacherous hound! You can prove nothing of the sort."

"Let me tell you something else," chuckled the villain.

"The girl, whom ye had hoped to marry, is now mine."

"You lie!"

"Easy! You can call me names safely now. She came into our camp on her horse and demanded your release. I detained her—of course."

There was a ring of exultation in the villain's voice that maddened Opdyke. He saw that the guerrilla was telling the truth.

Kitty Carlton, anxious to know her lover's fate, had boldly ridden into the outlaw's camp and demanded his release.

Whatever might be said as to her lack of wisdom in this move, it proved that she was ready to sacrifice her life for him.

Opdyke quivered with deep emotion. With clenched hands and knit brows he faced the villain.

"Manton, if there is a spark of manhood in you, show it now. That young woman does not love you, nor she never will. Set her free, as an honorable man should."

Manton laughed scornfully.

"You amuse me," he said. "For what do you take me? I am not a fool to throw away the prize when once it is in my grasp."

"But she will never marry you."

"You make a mistake," said the guerrilla, who had

dropped the vernacular of the guerrilla class, and thereby showed that he was a man of education. He showed his teeth like a tiger. "She will marry me!"

"Not of her own free will."

"Bah! that is nothing! I will tame her with the greatest of ease. I know how to handle such as she. By the way, captain, this man is a Confederate traitor. If you will deliver him up to me I will draw off my men and molest you no more."

Jack smiled grimly.

"You are singularly generous, in view of the fact that I am pursuing you."

"You pursuing me?"

"Yes; I mean to wipe you and your band out, root and branch."

Manton shrugged his shoulders.

"Have you counted the cost?" he asked. "Do you realize that you must have a larger force than you now have?"

"I shall not require it."

"Once again I make you the fair proposition. Will you turn this man over to me?"

"No!"

An oath escaped Manton. His face flamed with passion.

"Then I will never leave your track until I have exterminated you and your band of so-called Blues. Make no mistake, your fate is sealed. I will give no quarter, but will wipe you out eternally."

"Very good," said Jack. "I shall be pleased to see how you will keep your threat."

"And you shall see it."

"Is this all you have to say?"

"Yes."

"Very good! Return to your line, for I shall resume our attack at once."

Fuming and raving, Manton walked away. In a few moments he was with his men, and the conference was over.

"A greater scoundrel never went unhung," said Jack, forcibly, as they returned to the Blues' trenches. "I wonder if he told the truth about the young girl?"

Opdyke nodded in distress.

"Oh, yes, I fear it is so," he said. "It would be just like her to do a thing of that kind. She would sacrifice everything for me."

"She must be rescued," said Jack, forcibly. "No time must be lost. It is not likely that she is with this party. Where would he keep her?"

Opdyke shook his head.

"I hardly know, unless it is the cabin where I was confined," he replied. "I can find my way thither all right."

"Very good. Suppose I send a detachment up there to rescue her?"

Opdyke gave an eager cry.

"That is the best plan," he cried. "Let me lead the party."

"Very well," agreed the young captain of the Blues. "I can ill afford to spare the men, but you shall have half a dozen of them and start for the cabin at once."

"Heaven bless you!" cried the young lover. "I have hopes that I will win success."

"I shall pray that you will."

It did not take long to make the arrangements. Jack detailed Corporal Peters and six of the Blues to accompany Opdyke.

A short while later they slipped away into the forest in the rear of the Blues' intrenchments. They were soon beyond hearing.

Jack now gave his attention to the foe in front. It did not take him long to direct that fire be opened on them.

For a time the guerrillas made answer, then they retired out of range. There was an interval of inaction.

But Jack had no idea that Manton had given up the battle. He was, beyond doubt, planning some stratagem.

"Very well," he muttered, "we are ready for them."

"Do you know what I think?" asked Hal.

"No!"

"They have sent for help to the nearest Confederate outpost. Their plan is to deliver us over to the foe in that way."

Jack gave a start. He saw the logic of this plan at once. It decided him upon one point.

He knew that under such circumstances it would be foolish to sit still and await their fate.

There was only one thing to do. He quickly decided upon it. He must attack the guerrillas at once or make a retreat.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HAND-CAR AND ITS OCCUPANTS.

Jack could not see the feasibility of a retreat just yet. To him the only course open was to attack.

He knew that to remain idle was to invite the foe to come up and surround him in overpowering numbers.

Hal finally asked:

"Well, captain, what is it to be?"

"There is only one chance for us," said Jack. "We must wipe out Manton and his gang at once or they will surely wipe us out."

"Then we shall attack?"

"Yes."

"Shall I give the order?"

"Wait a moment!"

Jack stepped out in front of the trenches and addressed the boys.

"Comrades," he cried, "we are at this moment in a precarious position. If we remain here to wait for the foe to attack us we are lost, for they have sent for reinforcements and intend to entirely surround us. There is only one chance for us, and I want to warn you in advance that it is a desperate one. We must attack the guerrillas and scatter them effectually. We can then safely retreat. But every

man must stand ready to fight to the death. Not one must shrink. If we all hang together I believe that we can beat them. But even if we are defeated, we will die as men should, without fear and without reproach."

The Blues rose and cheered as one man. It was gratifying to Jack to see that they were in earnest.

At once he gave the word. They left the trenches and advanced to the attack.

Slowly they moved up on the guerrillas' position.

Some shots were fired into the thicket. But there was no reply.

Jack, however, was prepared for this and governed himself accordingly. He fancied it was the purpose of the enemy to hold their fire until within effective range.

So he thinned his line as much as possible and swung around by the flank. But still no fire was returned.

Then the Blues poured a volley into the thickets, where they believed the guerrillas were. There was still no reply, nor no evidence of the foe.

On pushed the Blues, until suddenly a startling discovery was made. There was no foe.

The position lately held by the guerrillas was vacated.

They had departed suddenly, and for some inexplicable reason. The Blues pushed on for half a mile beyond their position.

But not a sign of them was to be seen. They were gone.

"What the deuce does this mean?" cried Hal Martin, in amazement. "What do you think of it, Jack?"

The young captain was silent a moment. To him there seemed a certainty of some strange scheme. It was certainly a stratagem of the villain, Manton.

But what this stratagem was now remained a problem.

Some motive, some powerful reason there was for Manton's strange action. It was some while before Jack hit upon a theory.

"When an enemy withdraws from before you in superior force, it is usually owing to the fact that the ground is not well chosen or its communications are threatened," philosophized Jack. "I can think of nothing else."

"Ah, that gives a hint," cried Hal. "Do you suppose that Opdyke and Peters have reached the cabin where the girl is imprisoned, and he has fallen back to prevent her rescue?"

"They have hardly had time for that."

"That is true. By the way, is it not strange that we have heard nothing of our scout, Carlton?"

"I have thought of that," agreed Jack. "It certainly is odd."

"It seems to me so. Perhaps he has made some sort of a move that may account for this action of Manton's?"

"I can hardly see what it can be, unless he has brought reinforcements unexpectedly."

"Well, what is to be done?"

"If Opdyke was here we would go on to the cabin, where it is assumed that the girl prisoner is confined. But I do not know its location."

"Nor I," agreed Hal. "But there is yet another plan."

"What?"

"We might employ scouts and trail them. It will be easy enough to do that."

"No!" said Jack, decisively. "We must not forget that we are on the defensive. We are in the enemy's country, and our only method is to keep out of all battles possible, commit whatever damage we can safely, and let it go at that."

"Very good," said Hal. "Then what is our next move?"

"We will get out of this region certainly. I think we may march south for a short distance. We must keep ever on the alert. It is about time for us to think of returning, for it is nearly time for the advance on Corinth."

"One thing puzzles me."

"What?"

"Where is the brigade of four regiments that Halleck was to send in behind us as possible reinforcements? Have they turned back?"

Jack gave a start.

He recalled now fully General Halleck's promise. The regiments had certainly not come up.

It was quite likely that they had retreated in the face of a superior demonstration by the Confederates. The Blues, being a small body of men and rapid marchers, had pushed through safely.

However this was, Jack knew that the Blues must depend wholly upon their own resources for extrication from their present position of danger.

So the Blues started away on a march southward.

Jack proceeded with the extreme of caution. He knew that at any moment they might stumble upon the foe.

For the rest of the day they kept on through woods and lanes, until, near evening, they came to a line of railroad. Jack did not know what points it connected, but he saw that it was of temporary construction and, no doubt, for military purposes.

This interested him greatly, for he saw a chance for another exploit. The Blues made camp in the woods nearby, and the young captain set out to investigate.

With Hal Martin he climbed the roadbed and inspected the track. The rails were light and the ties were of logs, showing hasty construction.

Even as they stood there, a distant whistle was heard, followed by the roar of an approaching train.

"Hello!" exclaimed Hal. "Here comes a train. Let us see what it is."

The two young officers secreted themselves in a thicket nearby and waited.

In a few moments the locomotive swung around a curve. Behind it were a dozen flat-cars. On these were grouped hundreds of soldiers, dressed in gray.

"Hello!" exclaimed Hal. "What fools we were, Jack!"

"Why?"

"They are going to Corinth to reinforce Beauregard."

"Well?"

"We ought to have ripped up the rails and stopped them."

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"I am afraid we would have caught a Tartar. They greatly outnumber us," he said.

"That's so," admitted Hal. "But we ought to smash the railroad, some way or other."

"That we will do. But—hello!"

The exclamation escaped Jack's lips, and he sprang out of his concealment. Around the curve there had swung a hand-car.

On it were four occupants. Two were men and two were women.

The men were dressed in the rough style of guerrillas. The women were, respectively, a young white woman and a negro wench.

It is hardly necessary to say that Jack and Hal were interested, inasmuch as the young white girl was recognized by them.

She was no other than Kitty Carlton.

Up the track rushed the two young Union officers, flourishing their pistols. The terrified guerrillas leaped from the hand-car and ran. The hand-car slackened speed.

In an instant Jack sprang upon the car and stopped it.

The negro woman cowered in terror, but a wild cry of joy escaped Kitty Carlton.

"Oh, it is Captain Clark," she cried. "We are saved—saved!"

"You are right, Miss Carlton," cried Jack, as he sprung down from the hand-car. "Allow me to assist you."

"Thank you. Oh, where did you come from, Captain Clark? I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you. Oh, I have had a terrible time, and I was made a prisoner by Manton."

"I heard all about it, Miss Carlton. But where have you come from?"

"We have been confined in an old cabin up in the ridges. But a few hours ago some of Manton's men came, and

marched us down to the railroad and put us on this car. Where they intended to take us, I don't know."

"Then Manton was not with them?"

"No."

"Strange! He and his men have disappeared. My company of Blues is encamped just over here in the woods. We have been trying to locate the villain."

"We learned from one of the guerrillas that there is serious trouble a few miles below here," said Kitty.

"Trouble?" asked Jack. "Of what sort?"

"The Confederate outposts have been attacked by a large body of Union troops, who have come up the Tennessee in flatboats. There has been hot fighting down there. I fancy that is why Manton sent these men to take us away. He feared that we would be rescued."

In all their lives Jack and Hal had never received a greater shock of surprise.

"What," gasped the young captain, "do you mean that? Our Union troops in force down there?"

"Yes."

The two young officers looked at each other. Then Hal exclaimed:

"I have it!"

"What?"

"Halleck has kept his word. He has sent us reinforcements, but it was by way of the Tennessee River!"

Jack saw that this was likely the truth, and for an instant his joy was so great that he could hardly contain himself.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOLDING UP THE TRAIN.

"I don't care how he has sent the reinforcements," Jack cried, "so long as he has sent them. Hooray! We are all right, Hal!"

"Of course we are!"

"We shall pull out all safe!"

"You bet!"

"We'll rip their old railroad up. We will hit another supply train, and we'll exterminate Manton and his guerrillas! Hip, hooray!"

The delight and enthusiasm of the two young Union officers knew no bounds. But Kitty Carlton, white-faced and anxious, had waited.

"Now that I have given you good news," she said, "pray do the same by me."

"Well?" asked Jack.

"Tell me, have you heard of him?"

"Who? Oh, I know!" Jack gave a little leap in the air.

"He is all right, Miss Carlton. He escaped, and now, with our corporal and a detachment, is looking for you."

The young girl staggered, and seemed for a moment to grow faint with excess of joy. Then she became calm, and, extending her hand, said:

"I thank you."

"You are welcome," replied Jack. "But I feel that I owe you more than you owe me. Do not worry further about Mr. Opdyke. He will certainly soon be with you. Now, I advise you to go right back to Elsmere and wait for him to come."

"I will take your advice," said Kitty, joyfully. "But—with all the fighting going on about here, Elsmere will be hardly a safe place to stay. I have an aunt in Corinth——"

"Go there then, by all means. But—hang it! There is the rub. I cannot send you an escort——"

"I will stay with you and your company for the present, if you will permit me," she said. "Lydia will give me her services, and I shall be all right."

"Yo' kin feel easy about dat, missy," said the colored woman. "I'se done ready to go anywhere wif yo'."

"Good!" cried Jack. "We shall be honored with your company, and I will provide for you as well as I can. You may see some rough service, for there is likely to be hard fighting all about us."

"Do not fear for me," said Kitty, "I am not afraid, as you well know."

"Indeed, I do know it. Anyone who is plucky enough to walk right into the guerrilla's den and defy him as you did, need not be accused of cowardice."

"I do not know that it was wise of me to do that," she said. "But I could not believe that he would dare detain me."

"He is a villain."

"I hoped that he would yield to my entreaties to spare Will."

"He would have hung him before your eyes. But he was fortunate enough to escape."

So it was arranged at once that Kitty should remain with the Blues. As it was now easy to find the way to the guerrillas' cabin from Kitty's directions, Jack decided to send a messenger thither to see if Corporal Peters and Opdyke could be found.

In the meantime the Blues began to divert themselves by tearing up the railroad track.

The rails were ripped up and fires made of the log ties. In a short while the road was made a wreck.

And just as they had completed the task, the distant whistle of a locomotive was heard. It was plain that another train was coming.

For a moment Jack thought of taking a hasty leave of the place. He knew that the train might have a large force of Confederates on board.

But Hal was in favor of awaiting results.

"Let us see who is on that train," he cried. "Let us hold it up. If they are too many for us we can retreat."

"All right," agreed the young captain, "it shall be so."

In order to hold up the train it was necessary to send a number of the Blues far down the track to rip up the rails after the train had passed.

There was no time to lose. The train was coming rapidly. In a short while she came in sight.

At once the engineer saw that the track was up ahead of him, and he sent up a wild danger whistle. The train consisted of the locomotive and three cars.

The car windows went up, and the soldiers peered out. But they put their heads in again quickly at a volley from the Blues.

In an instant the engineer attempted to reverse his engine. But the party of Blues in his rear had ripped up the rails.

The train was stalled. In an instant the gray uniforms were piling out of the cars and forming on the railroad embankment.

Jack saw that their number was not much larger than his own. In fact, they seemed to be a sort of bodyguard to several officers, resplendent in gold lace.

The daring plan of capturing these officers came to Jack. He at once determined to accomplish it.

So he gave the order to the Blues to attack.

They dashed forward with a wild cheer. The Confederates met them with a hasty volley, but their own ranks were shattered the next moment by a volley from the Blues.

Seeing that they were surrounded, one of the officers held up a white handkerchief on the point of his sword, in token of surrender.

At once Jack ordered his men to cease firing. He advanced to meet the officer, and was given a great start. He saw the stars upon his shoulders and was thrilled when he said:

"I am General Clifton, of the Confederate army. You have the best of us, captain, and we are compelled to ask your terms of surrender."

"Unconditional," replied Jack, "save that you may keep your side arms, and will be regarded as prisoners of war, subject to exchange."

"We can ask for no more," said General Clifton, "and I thank you, captain."

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues."

"Captain Clark, I present to you Colonel Lamont and Lieutenant Fraser. We are members of Beauregard's staff."

Jack shook hands with the Confederate officers, and their bodyguard marched forward and laid down their arms.

General Clifton was astonished when he saw what a small force they had yielded to.

"Why, I thought you had a regiment, at least," he said. "We could have given you a hard fight."

"Of what avail would it be?" said Jack. "You would have sacrificed a lot of your men."

"But we are needed at Corinth."

"So are we, and we are going there at the earliest moment."

Jack now, however, was in a quandary. He did not really know what to do with his prisoners.

He was in the position of the man who bought the elephant. He had no supplies. He was far from his own army.

What could he do?

There was but one thing he could do, and this was to keep up a bold front.

He believed something would turn up, and, as a matter of fact, it did, but hardly as he expected.

The surrender was completed. The train was derailed and left in a wreck beside the track. The telegraph wires had been cut.

Surely the Blues were carrying out a bold enterprise. But Jack had gained courage, knowing that reinforcements were between him and the Tennessee.

But he felt that he had gone the limit.

It was now in order to withdraw as gracefully as possible from the locality and make his way to the Tennessee. So he gave orders to the Blues to fall in for a long march, with the prisoners in advance.

Jack had heard nothing from Corporal Tom Peters and Opdyke. The messenger he had sent to the cabin returned.

"They are not there," he reported. "We found no trace of them."

"All right," said Jack, regretfully. "I hate to leave them behind. Peters is a valuable man, but I see no other way."

"Don't you worry," said Hal, "Pete will show up all right. You need not fear for him."

"I hope so."

The Blues now started on their march eastward with their prisoners. They left the railroad behind.

Kitty Carlton rode beside Jack on Hal Martin's horse. There was still fear and anxiety in her face.

"I hope Manton has not recaptured Will," she said. "If he has, I shall never hear from him again."

"Have no fear," said Jack, "I think they will turn up all right."

For over an hour the Blues marched on. Thus far not a sign of the foe was to be seen. Jack listened for the distant sounds of a possible conflict between the Union reinforcements and Beauregard's outposts.

But nothing was to be heard.

They had passed through long stretches of forest, and now came to a little cut between two round-topped hills.

Suddenly down through this cut poured a line of armed men. They opened fire on the Blues.

So abrupt was their coming, and so sudden their attack, that there was confusion for some moments. But a few ringing orders from Jack straightened matters out.

The prisoners were quickly relegated to the rear and guards placed over them. The advance line of Blues deployed and answered the fire of the foe.

It required but a few moments for Jack Clark to realize a startling fact.

They were cut off and attacked by Manton and his guerrillas. Where the villain had come from was a complete mystery.

But that he was in front of them, and with a powerful force was enough. Jack knew that he had a desperate job before him.

The guerrillas outnumbered the Blues. They were savage and determined to crush the little Union command. They poured volley after volley down through the cut.

Then the cry went up:

"They are coming!"

CHAPTER XIV.

BACK TO SHILOH.

Every man in the little company of Blues stiffened with that cry. He knew well what it meant.

The least break in the line, a flinching, or a show of fear would, perhaps, be the end. The guerrillas were out for blood. They meant to give no quarter.

It was a purpose of annihilation that animated them. Murder was in their hearts.

So Jack spoke sharp, resolute words:

"Steady, Blues! It's all up if they get in. Throw them back! A steady nerve will do it."

The brave Boys in Blue, however, needed no urging.

They were resolute to the last degree. All felt that this was the crucial moment.

Back in the rear crouched Kitty Carlton. Her face was blanched, and her heart trembled for her brave defenders.

She knew well what it meant for her if they were overcome. An earnest prayer was on her lips.

Down came the horde of guerrillas on the charge.

But they had not the precision or uniformity of action of a well-drilled military company. They were irregular in line and in purpose.

A well-directed volley from the Blues checked them. Another disorganized them. Then Jack saw his chance.

With a cheering cry he sprang forward:

"Fix bayonets! Forward, Blues! Charge!"

Up the cut sprang the Blues like tigers. The line of glittering steel was too much for the guerrillas.

They recoiled and broke. In vain Manton tried to rally them. He was like a maniac.

Hal Martin saw him, and, picking up the musket of a dead soldier, he took aim at him and fired.

Manton reeled back and fell. Seeing the fall of their leader the guerrillas held no longer.

They broke and fled madly. The Blues sent volleys after them, but did not pursue.

Jack saw Hal's action.

"You brought him down, Hal," he cried.

"Yes," replied the young lieutenant. "I hope I did not kill him."

A few seconds later the two young officers were bending over the stricken guerrilla. He was struggling to get upon his feet.

The bullet had simply grazed his skull, stunning him for a moment. No one hindered his rising, and he stood, pale and blood-stained, among his captors.

The expression upon his face was most repulsive, so thoroughly impregnated was it with cowardice and hate. He looked furtively for an avenue of escape.

But there was none.

He was hopelessly trapped.

"Well, Manton," said Jack, in cold, hard tones, "you have reached the end of your rope."

"I—I surrender," gasped the guerrilla, "I'm a prisoner of war."

"Are you?" said the young captain, in a hard tone. "Whom would we exchange you for? Don't deceive yourself, my fine fox. The halter is your fate!"

"No, no! For pity's sake, I beg of you, don't kill me! I'll swear never to take up arms again. Let me live! My life is precious! Don't take it away! Don't kill me!"

Jack turned away in disgust from the specious pleadings

of the coward. He saw Kitty Carlton listening with eager interest.

"Miss Carlton," he said, "the scoundrel will persecute you no more."

She drew a deep breath.

"Will you—hang him?"

"Yes."

"It is a human life. Do you think it would be of any use——"

"Never," replied Jack, firmly. "He is a treacherous snake, who would turn at the slightest chance."

The guerrillas did not return to the attack. The Confederate general, Clifton, had been a witness of all.

"Captain Clark," he said, "I hope you will not accept that fellow or his followers as a type of our soldiers. He is not recognized by our military authorities."

"I understand," said Jack. "He is as repugnant to you as to me."

"Quite so."

"I intend to see justice done."

"In that you are right. Such men are a menace to the country. But I admire your little company. They are fighters to the backbone. And they hang together so well."

"That is certainly a compliment to the boys," replied Jack. "I thank you in their behalf."

"What is your purpose now, captain? Will you march on?"

"By all means! I am informed that reinforcements are but a few miles away."

Jack now hurried away to look after the wounded and to see that the dead were buried.

This task over the Blues were once again on their march. They passed through the little cut, and then were given a thrill of surprise.

Far down in the country below they saw a cloud of smoke. To their ears came the volleyings of musketry, and into the air rose shrieking shells.

It was plain that a heavy engagement was taking place down there. Jack's nerves tingled.

He knew that Colonel Folsom's regiments, sent to reinforce him, must be below there. For a time the Blues watched the scene.

They saw lines of gray deploying in the woods, and beyond, in trenches, were lines of blue warding off their attack.

It looked as if the gray far outnumbered the blue, and this gave Jack a thrill.

Studying the situation, he became conscious of one fact. An attempt was being made to flank the Union line.

"Do you see that flanking move, Jack?" cried Hal.

"Yes."

"I am afraid that if the blue regiments don't change front they will get in their rear."

"No they won't," said Jack.

"What?"

"Not while we can prevent it."

Hal looked up in surprise.

"Can we do any good down there?" he asked.

"Certainly we can! We can ask for no better chance. We will march down that road to the right and come up in the enemy's rear."

"But if they turn—they are superior in numbers——"

"If they turn they are lost. Simply leave it to me. Order the Blues forward at once."

No time was lost. The Blues cut down to the highway below in double-quick order. They were now but half a mile in the rear of the Confederates.

The rear guard saw the blue line coming and the alarm was given. At once the pickets in the rear were driven in.

Astonishment and terror seized upon the Confederate line. Nothing is so demoralizing as an attack in the rear.

In less time than it takes to tell it they began to huddle and lose their formation. They fell back at right angles, and this gave the Union regiments in front the chance they wanted.

They came forward at a mad charge. In an instant the Confederate line rolled up. The sight of the blue uniforms in their rear was too much.

A fearful rout was quickly in progress. For over an hour they were pursued. Then the Fairdale Blues found themselves mingled with the men of Folsom's regiment.

It was some while later that Jack met the Union colonel, who greeted him with delight.

"Well, we did find you," he cried. "General Halleck had no idea you would dare to penetrate so far into this region."

"General Halleck does not know the Blues," said Jack. "We always go where we are sent."

"Well, you've raised the deuce in Bragg's rear. They thought Sherman had cut through and they were going to be surrounded."

At this Jack laughed.

"I fear that is an exaggeration," he said. "But we destroyed a supply train, cut a railroad and captured a general and his bodyguard."

Colonel Folsom was astonished when he learned this. The Confederate prisoners were brought up from the rear and turned over to Colonel Folsom.

"But I don't understand why you came down here to look for us," said Jack. "I didn't think General Halleck meant it."

"Well, he didn't," said Folsom. "You owe your lives to one man."

"Who?"

"The scout, Ben Carlton!"

Jack gave a great exclamation.

"Carlton!" he cried. "You don't mean it? Did he return to Shiloh?"

"Yes, and induced us to come to your relief. He represented that you were absolutely cut off and would be annihilated. At first Halleck did not want to go to so much trouble for just a handful of men. But Carlton hung on, and finally Halleck put us aboard the gunboats and sent us up the Tennessee. We got here, it seems, just in time."

Jack was much overcome with emotion.

"Where is Carlton?" he asked.

Folsom looked at him keenly a moment, and said:

"He is dead! He was shot by a Confederate sharpshooter as we were disembarking. He was a brave man."

Jack was silent. A great wave of emotion swept over him. It was some moments before he recovered.

Then he turned and walked away. He did not tell Kitty of her uncle's death, nor did she ever know the true tragedy of his life.

It was while the Union regiments were bivouacked that night that a great uproar arose on the picket line.

Colonel Folsom sent a guard down to see what the matter was. It returned in a few moments with half a dozen men.

Corporal Tom Peters and his small detachment marched into the light of the campfires.

Jack sprang forward with a cry of joy.

"It's my corporal!" he cried. "Hello, Peters! Where is Opdyke?"

"Sure, he is here all right," cried the fat little corporal, "but we couldn't find the girl. Much as ever we could do to find our way here."

Opdyke was grasping Jack's hand the next moment.

"Have you—any news?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Come with me!"

A few moments later, with a glad cry, the young Confederate lieutenant clasped the girl he loved to his breast. There was now no obstacle between them, no barrier to their love.

"And we owe it all to Captain Clark," said Kitty, with pretty blushes. "If he will visit us at Elsmere——"

"He shall be the lion of the place," cried Opdyke. "Captain Clark, I ask you to release me on parole. I intend never to take up arms against the United States again."

"Your request shall be granted," said Jack, "and I wish you both much joy."

The next morning, having procured horses, Opdyke and his fair bride-to-be rode away to Elsmere. Jack heard from them often in after years.

By Colonel Folsom's order, the guerrilla, Manton, was hanged that morning. Thus ended his brutish career.

There was plain indications that heavy bodies of Confederate troops were coming down to cut off Folsom and his regiments. Now that his mission was accomplished, the Union colonel had no reason for endangering his men by remaining longer in that section. So they marched back to the landing on the Tennessee.

Here they went aboard the gunboats awaiting them, and soon were on their way back to Pittsburg Landing.

The next day Jack Clark and Colonel Folsom reported to General Halleck. That great commander regarded the captain of the Blues critically.

"I can see why Grant made such good use of you," he said. "I shall bear you in mind in the future."

Higher praise the young captain of the Blues could not have asked. He returned to his company to await further special orders, which were not long in coming.

But neither Jack Clark nor his brave Boys in Blue ever forgot those ticklish moments, when, far down in the enemy's country in Mississippi, they were cut off and placed between two fires.

THE END.

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